Faculty of Social Sciences
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JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY AFTER THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

JOURNALISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF AUSTERITY POLICIES

Timo Harjuniemi

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This article-based dissertation investigates the relationship between professional journalism and democracy after the financial crisis and the euro crisis. The dissertation is motivated by the notion that the ability of professional journalism to facilitate democratic public communications is undermined by various factors. Technologically, journalism is being challenged by the breakdown of nationally regulated media environments, innovations in communication technologies, and the abundance of online content that often circumvents any ethical guidelines characteristic of professional journalism. Business-wise, the fact that mass publics are presented with unlimited options to professional journalism means that publishers can no longer exploit the lucrative bottlenecks between audiences and information and turn these opportunities into newspaper subscriptions and advertisement sales.

Politically, professional journalism is challenged by the social and economic turmoil that has undermined the legitimacy of established political forces and experts in the aftermath of the economic crisis. The financial crisis, the euro crisis, and the austerity measures that facilitated to combat the crises fragmented the political landscape of Western societies and brought into question some of the central tenets of liberal thought, such as political integration and economic globalization. The widespread anger toward elites—often said to be manifested by the Trump presidency or the Brexit process—seems to be directed toward journalists as well. With decreasing trust in media, journalists are often seen as stooges of a failing elite who are out of touch with ordinary people.

These concerns are illustrated by the grim analyses on the state of democratic public communications. It is even stated that the breakdown of the communication architecture regulated by professional journalists is paving the way for a "post-truth" world where expertise is irrelevant and rational deliberation is no longer possible. Instead of facts and critical analyses, mass publics are presented with fake news driven by populist passions or opaque algorithms with no respect for liberal democracy.

Amid these concerns, journalists and journalism scholars are faced with burning questions on journalism and its democratic functions. In an age characterized by declining media trust, radical political antagonisms, and technological rupture, how can journalism fulfil its democratic mission and work as a common communication architecture that would foster deliberation, provide people with analyses and information, and hold the powerful accountable?

This thesis argues that to enhance the democratic power of journalism, a critical analysis of the journalism–democracy nexus is in order. To move beyond the standard notions about the democratic importance of watchdog

journalism, it should be noted that the relationship between journalism and democracy has always been ridden with contradictions.

This thesis addresses the relationship between journalism and democracy via a synopsis and four case studies that deal with the austerity policies that quickly began dominating European economic policy-making after the financial crisis. The thesis argues that the 2010 turn to austerity—after a brief period of economic stimulus—marks a watershed moment for liberal Western societies. Austerity policies further undermined established political formations and opened a space for alternative political projects in the form of right-wing anti-immigrant sentiment or left-wing economic populism.

The synopsis chapter begins with an overview of professional journalism. To understand the current turmoil of journalism, it is essential to understand the history of professional journalism as well as the political and technological cornerstones of the profession. Moreover, the synopsis chapter addresses the democratic functions of journalism via the different traditions of democratic theory. It also presents an overview of the financial crisis and the euro crisis and discusses the relationship between journalism and the economy.

The empirical case studies argue that instead of fostering a pluralist debate on austerity, European journalism echoed the narrative on the inevitable nature of austerity policies. To be sure, journalists also presented critical austerity analyses and criticized the hardline German stance on austerity; however, overall, journalism was dominated by the "necessary austerity" narrative.

Article I argues that the German government, arguably the most important player in the European economic policy-making, was able to use European newspapers to present the euro crisis as a crisis of public indebtedness and deteriorating competiveness that needed to be tackled with austerity and competitiveness-enhancing structural reforms. Article I argues that despite national differences, the "German view" on the euro crisis was the dominant way of making sense of the crisis in European newspapers.

Article II argues that the Finnish debate on economic policy-making was dominated by the Ministry of Finance and the European Union—both of whom argued that austerity was needed to combat the economic predicament. Further, Article II argues that as the political elites coalesced around the austerity consensus, it was difficult for journalism to present the public with alternative viewpoints on austerity. Some economists, for example, publicly criticized the timing and scaling of austerity, but overall, the journalistic debate on Finnish austerity was dominated by the austerity consensus.

Articles III and IV argue that journalism has historically represented austerity as a necessary fix to economic woes. Austerity has been in order to modernize European welfare states to meet the demands set by a competitive global economy. Moreover, political opposition to austerity has been often represented as populist or selfish. However, journalism has also criticized dogmatic austerity, as illustrated by the criticism toward Germany's tough austerity stance amid the European economic crisis.

Finally, the thesis argues that it is important to move beyond mere journalism criticism, which easily turns into cynicism and leads to the dismissal of journalism as inherently anti-democratic. Therefore, the synopsis chapter of the thesis draws from the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, according to whom democratic public life is characterized by the existence of differing hegemonic projects. By building on Mouffe's insights and the individual case studies, the thesis makes the case for a journalism more attuned to the conflictual nature of 21st century political life. The case studies—according to which the austerity debate was characterized by a strong degree of consensus—underline the importance of journalism open to varying politico-ideological projects that have come to the fore after the financial crisis. The thesis argues that by fostering ideological pluralism, journalism might be able to turn conflicts—inherent of all democratic life—into settings where political worldviews could clash while maintaining a certain level of mutual respect. While acknowledging the enormous challenges that journalism is faced with—economic, technological, or political—the thesis argues that such ideological pluralism might improve the public legitimacy of journalism and its democratic potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"What seems like a conscious career decision was merely a haphazard fall into the darkness," writes Finnish essayist Antti Nylén in his book *Häviö* (*The Defeat*) when describing his path toward becoming a writer – a career underpinned by grant applications and material uncertainty (the clumsy English translations are mine). I do not wish to equate my experiences with Nylén's as I have been privileged enough to enjoy a certain level of stability. I can, however, relate to the randomness of life. More than a result of long-term plans, the decision to write a doctoral dissertation stemmed from one event leading to another.

However, thanks to a number of people, I am confident that I am walking in the right direction. First, I want to thank my supervisors, Professors Anu Kantola and Juha Herkman for their guidance and advice. Anu was the one who convinced me to study the notion of *austerity*, and as a supervisor, she has been an excellent combination of pragmatism and liberty. She has given me the space to find my own way, but when needed, she was determined to push me toward the right direction. Juha has always taken the time to comment on my writing and manuscripts and helped me to develop my arguments. Moreover, it was Juha who asked me to join a research project on the journalistic representations of the European economic crisis. The decision to pursue a Ph.D. stems partly from this experience.

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Helsinki, November 2019

Timo Harjuniemi

CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Ojala, Markus & Harjuniemi, Timo (2016). Mediating the German ideology: Ordoliberal framing in European press coverage of the eurozone crisis. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 24(3): 414–430.

II Harjuniemi, Timo & Ampuja, Marko (2019). Established ideas from established institutions: austerity and structural reforms in the Finnish economic policy debate. *Critical Policy Studies*, 13(4): 451–469.

III Harjuniemi, Timo (2019). Reason over politics: *The Economist's* historical framing of austerity. *Journalism Studies*, 20(6): 804–822.

IV Harjuniemi, Timo (2019). *The Economist's* depoliticization of European austerity and the constitution of a 'euphemised' neoliberal discourse. *Critical Discourse Studies*, Epub ahead of print, DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2019.1649162.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

1 INTRODUCTION

Faced with struggles on multiple fronts, journalism is going through difficult times. Economically, the profession is challenged by the mushrooming of alternative content providers, enabled by innovations in communication technologies and the breakup of nationally regulated media ecologies. The vast number of popular choices means that publishers are no longer able to exploit the bottlenecks between audiences and information and turn these opportunities into newspapers subscriptions and ad sales. The stable professional culture with well-resourced newsrooms and job stability – characteristic of journalism's "high modernist" (Hallin 1992) period from mid-to-late 20th century – has therefore been making room for a more fragmented journalistic life and increasing precarization (Gollmitzer 2019).

Politically, the situation is difficult as well. The public opinion towards journalism is suspicious. Popular attitudes on journalism are characterized by distrust (Newman et al. 2018). Journalists are under attack by such hate-mongers as Donald Trump, and the widespread anger at elites seems to include journalists as well (Zelizer 2018). Professional journalists are increasingly seen as stooges of a failing ruling class out of touch with ordinary people. It seems obvious that the political crisis challenging liberal Western societies is a crisis of professional journalism as well, a profession whose history has gone in tandem with the history of liberal thought (Nerone 1995; Ward 2011).

These developments have implications for democratic public communication. Journalism still plays a vital role in orchestrating democratic debate. In complex mass societies where various aspects of life are played out in traditional and – increasingly – in digital media, journalism has an essential role in politics and public life. Journalism is a means of dealing with political differences and conflicts in a peaceful manner. Journalism works to articulate differing opinions in a shared public space. Journalism raises awareness of issues of common concern, and, as the public "watchdog", alerts the public of elite wrongdoings and holds the powerful accountable. In short, journalism is a vital institution for a pluralist liberal society.

It is not evident how journalism can fulfil its democratic functions in the current situation. The ability of journalism to function as a social arbiter and a common communicative architecture is being challenged by political polarization and shifts in public communications. Rising economic inequality in many Western societies has weakened social mobility and deepened the divide between the haves and the have-nots (Piketty 2017; Nachtwey 2018). The financial crisis and the austerity measures implemented after the near meltdown of the global economy worked to further disrupt the Post-World War II political dynamics (Tooze 2018). It is being argued that rising

polarization is undermining the social position of science, experts and journalists, the traditional truth-tellers of liberal Western societies (Waisbord 2018). Therefore, one can argue that it is more difficult for journalism to be the "centring" (Muhlmann 2008) force that would work to serve a democratic public by uniting it under an umbrella of common values. Indeed, there is some evidence that increasing political polarization and the popular distrust towards established political institutions are deteriorating media trust as well (Hanitzsch et al. 2018).

The authority of professional journalism is further undermined by the emergence of alternative news outlets and content providers, many of whom undercut any established norms of professional journalism. Media scholars argue that the fragmentation of mass-publics into digital silos – into which content is fed by opaque algorithms – means a crisis for the 20th century mass communication system, regulated by professional journalists and national regulatory authorities (Waisbord 2018b). The immense speed and affective intensity of digital public communications would seem to undermine joint efforts of democratic discourse, which often takes times and patience (Dahlgren 2018). Therefore, online public communications often resemble a battle zone where hateful actors organize to harass, for example, feminists, often for the sheer pleasure of transgression and trolling the liberal status quo (Nagle 2017; Seymour 2019). It is easy to notice how the utopias concerning the democratic and emancipatory potential of the internet and communication technologies have been making way for critical and even dystopian analyses. Instead of being "technologies of freedom" (Pool 1983), digital technologies offer "data capitalism" (Myers West 2019) and fine-grained means of surveillance and subordination (Morozov 2013; Couldry and Mejias 2019).

It is argued that combined with the rise of populist politics, these shifts in public communications feed a chaotic system of "post-truth communication" (Waisbord 2018b), which renders any claim to truth as a politically biased endeavour. Media scholar Peter Dahlgren (2018) argues that post-truth signals a crisis of democracy and the emergence of a new epistemic regime, where emotional responses prevail over facts and reasoned analysis and where political tribalism overrides any attempt for public deliberation and consensus-seeking. No doubt, this thesis has faced criticism as well. Critics have noted how elite commentators and experts use the term "post-truth" to render populist political upheavals as dangerous deviations from the truthful order of things (Collins 2019). According to critics, post-truth works as a means of dismissing the political failures of liberal politics via shifting the focus on the irrationality of the mass publics, duped to populist politics by vicious outside agents fabricating viral social media content (Jutel 2019). However, the mere fact that our daily public discourse is filled with such buzzwords as "post-truth" or "fake news" signals a growing interest on the future of democratic public communication. We are in a situation characterized by a high demand for democratic debate and a cluelessness on

how to achieve it – despite the vast amount of different communication platforms.

Amid the turbulence, such traditional forms of public communication as journalism find it increasingly difficult to hold on to their authoritative status. Still, journalism has, with all its problems, served as "an essential institution of democratic public spheres" (Dahlgren 2018, 25). Therefore, I argue in this thesis that journalists and journalism scholars must muster responses to the plethora of pressing concerns, although it is evident that there are no one-size-fits-all fixes. No doubt, journalism scholarship has already addressed these issues. Media scholarship has recognized how media commercialization, the globalization of media systems and the breakdown of nationally regulated media spheres have paved the way for the alleged era of misinformation and populist figures (Pickard 2018; Waisbord 2018b). Further, scholarship has noted how the mainstream objective journalism finds it difficult to deal with such figures as Donald Trump with no respect of facts or truth (McNair 2017). Scholars have emphasized how journalists should not let autocratic-styled presidents dictate the news agenda but take a firm stance against anti-democratic figures (Benson 2018; Karpf 2018).

In a similar fashion, journalistic outlets have stressed the historical and well-founded argument that the free press plays a vital role in liberal democracies and that any attack on press freedom undermines the very premises of pluralist democratic societies.[1] The growing interest in "data journalism" (Anderson 2018) is another attempt to improve journalism. The idea is that using large datasets and scientific means of analysing and presenting the data, journalism can speak truth to power and reclaim its trustworthy position as a public disseminator of information and analysis, a position envisaged already in the early 20th century by such thinkers as Walter Lippmann (1920).

These are important undertakings. If we wish to maintain democratic public life, we need means of holding the powerful accountable as well as a space where we can have a shared view on the matter being debated. Journalism can provide us with these means. However, to save what is important in professional journalism for democracy, our analysis on journalisms woes must go deeper than the "well-worn" (Muhlmann 2010, 1)

[1] The fact that *The Washington Post*, in early 2017, reported that it has a new slogan – *Democracy Dies in Darkness* – is one sign of this. See *The Washington Post* 24.2.2017, "The Washington Post's new slogan turns out to be an old saying" (https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-washington-posts-new-slogan-turns-out-to-be-an-old-saying/2017/02/23/cb199cda-fa02-11e6-be05-1a3817ac21a5_story.html.) Another example was the billboard campaign of the biggest Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* organized during the Helsinki summit between U.S. President Trump and his Russian counterpart in July 2018. Such slogans as "Mr. President, Welcome to the land of the free press" were written on the billboards on the presidents' route from the Helsinki airport to the summit. See https://www.hs.fi/media/FreePress/Freepress%202018.html

notions about the freedom of expression or the importance of watchdog journalism. I argue that it is necessary to analyse the nexus between journalism and democracy in a way that does not shy away from the fact that the relationship has always been ridden with contradictions.

The aim of this article-based thesis and this synopsis chapter is to use the economic crisis and austerity measures as a prism through which to look at the relationship between journalism and democracy. I argue that there are good reasons for such a choice. The financial crisis of 2008–2009, the euro crisis that followed and the austerity measures (e.g. cuts in public spending) used to manage the crisis mark a watershed moment in liberal capitalist societies. They accelerated the erosion of established political forces and fuelled political fragmentation (Tooze 2018). Many of the premises of politics as usual – such as globalization, the free flow of goods and people as well as multilateral international governance – are being rethought and even undermined in the aftermath of the crisis. The resurgence of anti-establishment political ideas from both the left and the right signal a crisis of the post-World War II liberal political imaginary (Waisbord 2018). The crisis ended the seemingly non-conflictual era of politics when the antagonism between the financial markets and national welfare states had allegedly been resolved and politico-ideological conflicts largely replaced with wide-spread consensus on economic globalization (Mouffe 2018). I argue that the difficulties journalism and democratic public life are facing should not be thought of as separate phenomena. To understand the problems that journalism is facing and to revive journalism's democratic functions, we need to analyse these developments simultaneously.

As the financial crisis delivered a blow for common sense notions on politics and the economy, a space opened for the articulation of alternative ideas and ideologies. Whether in the form of anti-immigrant right-wing populism or revised socialist or social democratic ideals, we are witnessing the return of political contestation. The crisis is therefore an intriguing moment to analyse the democratic performance of journalism and to map out some of the root causes of journalism's current difficulties. The way in which journalism dealt with the crisis, I argue, shows how journalism often works to stave off criticism towards the prevailing order of things. And through analysing these dynamics, it is possible to sketch how journalism could, perhaps, develop new characteristics that would support a democratic public sphere.

2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This article-based thesis addresses the nexus between journalism, democracy and the economic crisis. It explores how European professional journalism addressed the policies of austerity – i.e. cuts in public spending and wages – that started to dominate the European policy response to the crisis in 2010 (see Blyth 2015). This thesis, via four case studies and this synopsis chapter, evaluates how journalism succeeded in fulfilling the democratic functions often given to journalism by media theory. These functions include, for example, monitoring the decision-makers on behalf of the public, facilitating a pluralist debate on politics and providing the public with critical analyses on current affairs (McNair 2000; Schudson 2008; Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015).

On an empirical level, this thesis is an analysis on the journalistic coverage of austerity policies. The thesis is comprised of four empirical case studies and contributes to the burgeoning scholarship on austerity, the economic crisis and journalism (Tracy 2012; Mylonas 2014; Preston and Silke 2014; Doudaki 2015; Berry 2016; Knowles et al. 2017; Basu 2018). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the results reiterate the well-established critique towards the problematic tendencies of professional journalism (see Hall et al. 1978; Hermann and Chomsky 1988; Philo et al. 1995). The empirical analyses illustrate how dominant national and transnational elites dominated the journalistic debate on European austerity policies in 2009–2014 and how journalism worked to legitimize austerity as the only response to the economic crisis.

However, to move beyond mere journalism criticism – which is in danger of leading to destructive cynicism and the abandonment of professional journalism as inherently anti-democratic (see Muhlmann 2010) – the thesis contributes to the topical debate on the difficulties of professional journalism and democratic public communication. These concerns are manifested by a declining level of trust towards news and the acute concerns regarding the deteriorating conditions of the public sphere (Waisbord 2018b; Dahlgren 2018). By building on the case studies and on the lessons from the journalistic coverage of the crisis and austerity, this thesis deliberates on the potential ways to address these concerns. How can professional journalism be developed to better deal with public and political life that often seems to be overtly antagonistic?

This thesis will deliberate on the relationship between journalism and democracy with the help of four case studies that deal with the journalistic coverage of the European economic crisis and austerity policies (see Table 1). The four articles will approach the issue from different perspectives. Article I addresses the journalistic coverage of the euro crisis with a vast quantitative analysis, comprised of data collected from eight European countries. The

study analyses the dominant journalistic framing of the euro crisis between 2010 and 2012. The study examines how European news media interpreted the euro crisis. What were the root causes of the crisis? And what should have been done to address the crisis and combat the economic predicament?

Article II takes a different approach. With the EU and eurozone member state Finland as a case study, the study analyses how the turn to austerity policies in 2010 played out in the leading national Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)*. The study shows how the long-term economic policy ideas nurtured by the dominant institutions of economic policymaking, namely the Finnish Ministry of Finance and the European Union, dominated the debate on Finnish economic policies between 2009 and 2014. The article argues that while a strong elite consensus on the course of economic policy prevails, it is difficult for journalism to provide the public with viewpoints that would substantially differ from dominant ideas.

Article III adopts a historical approach to analyse how journalism has addressed the question of austerity. The study analyses the austerity debates of the influential business magazine *The Economist* between 1947 and 2012. The qualitative frame analysis illustrates how journalism has traditionally addressed austerity with an enduring frame that sees austerity as necessary in times of economic difficulties.

Article IV adopts a discourse theoretical perspective and analyses *The Economist* newspaper's coverage of European austerity measures in 2010–2012. It contributes to the scholarly discussion on media, austerity and neoliberalism by illustrating how journalism constructs neoliberal discourses. The study finds that during the euro crisis, *The Economist* addressed austerity as necessary to modernize the European welfare states to meet the demanding conditions of the global economy. Accordingly, anti-austerity sentiments were often deemed as populist or selfish, stemming from the need to serve vested or sectoral interests.

Table 1. *The individual articles of the thesis*

Article	Research Problem	Theoretical framework and methodology	Data	Contribution to the thesis
Article I: Mediating the German Ideology: Ordoliberal Framing in European Press Coverage of the Eurozone Crisis.	The public legitimation of austerity policies in European newspapers.	The German economic tradition of "ordoliberalism" as a tool in the public legitimation of policy decisions taken in the crisis management. Quantitative frame analysis used to examine the salience of different journalistic frames.	7986 newspaper articles from eight eurozone countries between 2010 and 2012.	The article examines the public salience of different interpretations about the euro crisis and illustrates the dominance of German economic policy ideas in the European public sphere.
Article II: Established ideas from established institutions: austerity and structural reforms in the Finnish economic policy debate.	The public interplay between dominant economic policy institutions and economic ideas in Finland during the euro crisis.	Ideational institutionalism perspective to analyse the interplay between economic ideas and institutions. Qualitative textual analysis to pinpoint the main actors and ideas of the Finnish economic policy debate.	119 newspaper articles from the leading Finnish daily *Helsingin Sanomat* between 2009 and 2014.	The article examines how the journalistic representations of the euro crisis echoed the economic policy consensus created by the dominant institutions of economic policy making.
Article III: Reason over politics: The Economist's historical framing of austerity.	Journalism's historical framing of austerity.	Critical theory perspective to examine how journalism produces hegemonic notions about the economy. Qualitative frame analysis.	131 articles from *The Economist* between 1947 and 2012.	The article analyses how journalism has historically addressed austerity as a necessary response to economic crises.
Article IV: The Economist's depoliticization of austerity and the constitution of a "euphemized" neoliberal discourse.	Journalism and the constitution of a 'euphemised' neoliberal discourse amid the European economic crisis.	Post-structuralist discourse theory perspective used to map the articulatory logics of neoliberal discourse. Discourse theoretical analysis.	100 articles from The Economist between 2010 and 2012.	The article analyses how *The Economist* newspaper constructed a "euphemized" neoliberal discourse during the euro crisis.

The structure of this synopsis chapter is as follows. I will start by discussing the main concepts of this thesis – journalism and democracy – and how these two concepts are interwoven. I will discuss the concept of "professional journalism" and provide the reader with a history of the professionalization of journalism. I argue that it is important to understand how journalism professionalized into its contemporary form if we are to understand the difficulties that it is facing in the 21st century. I will also discuss the various democratic roles that journalism in given by scholars. The liberal, deliberative and agonistic perspectives work as tools with which to address the democratic performance of journalism during the crisis and the period of austerity.

I will also briefly discuss the criticism towards professional journalism: the journalistic movements that have challenged standardized notions about professional journalism, as well as the critical strand of media and journalism studies. These lines of thought have both emphasized the role of professional journalism in structuring and disseminating elite ideas. Critics have argued that instead of fostering a pluralist debate and empowering democratic demands, professional journalism – due to increasing pressure from market forces and institutionalized professional practices – works to shield the status quo. I will also situate the study in its context, the euro crisis, and discuss the relationship between journalism and economic crises.

After presenting the findings of the four case studies, the thesis concludes by discussing the future political and democratic roles of journalism. In this concluding chapter, I will build on the results of my empirical case analyses and sketch ideas for improving democratic journalism. I will return to democratic theory and deliberate on how to develop journalism in turbulent times. Especially, I will build upon the political theorist Chantal Mouffe according to whom democratic public debate is characterized by the presence of competing ideological world views (Mouffe 1989; 2013). I argue that the journalistic coverage of austerity (which was characterized by a strong degree of consensus) makes the case for a more pluralist and ideologically diverse journalism. I will deliberate as to whether these insights could provide us with means of developing journalism to be better equipped in dealing a with a highly politicized 21st century public life.

My aim is to build upon democratic theory and the radical critique (Laclau and Mouffe 2014) of liberal democratic theory to develop ideas that could possibly help journalism to foster a pluralist debate between different political ideas and ideological worldviews. Although liberal democratic thought and professional journalism subscribe to the values of pluralism, they are often characterized by striving for a consensus that is in danger of stifling democratic debate (Mouffe 2009; Fenton 2016; Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2017; Karppinen 2018). In analysing the current difficulties of public communications and journalism, I argue that Mouffe's (2013) distinction between "antagonism" and "agonism" could be helpful. I will deliberate whether journalism could help in taming political passions and antagonisms – which are inherent of all social life and should not be eliminated – into

agonistic settings where differing ideological worldviews could clash while maintaining a mutual respect towards the democratic ideals of equality and freedom.

To bring these ideas closer to journalism practice, I will use Géraldine Muhlmann's (2008; 2010) distinction between "unifying" and "decentring" journalisms. Muhlmann argues that historically, journalism has been divided between these two professional poles. The "unifying" journalist has sought to unify the public around a "we" that can share a consensus on a set of facts or values. The "decentring" journalist, on the contrary, has sought to make visible the inherently conflictual nature of the social world. I make the argument that the current political conjuncture calls for professional journalism that can de-centre the world. As it is getting increasingly difficult to reach a like-minded public, journalism that is overtly committed to unifying the public might, paradoxically, work to further stir up political antagonisms by delegitimizing some segments of the population. However, by working to de-centre the social world (i.e. shedding light on various conflicts and giving voice to various politico-ideological demands) journalism might be able to build connections between different political groups and help to foster agonistic public debates.

One should be aware that such theoretical choices have normative and political repercussions. Indeed, as Kari Karppinen (2019, 20), argues, "[m]edia and communication research is never far removed from political and normative questions". When scholars use concepts such as democracy, freedom and pluralism, they make normative assumptions about the role media and communication systems should play in public life. Still, it is useful to be aware of the limitations of one's theoretical and conceptual choices. It is important to highlight that the democratic theory championed by Mouffe is rooted in a post-Marxist critique of liberalism and liberal democratic theory (Laclau and Mouffe 2014). In journalism studies, this position has certain implications. Using Mouffe's ideas to analyse journalism tends to produce research settings and interpretations that critically highlight the ideological and political limits of professional journalism (see Phelan 2014). Should one look at austerity and journalism through another conceptual lens or democratic traditions, the results of the analysis, no doubt, would be somewhat different. In chapter 11, I further reflect on agonistic democratic theory and its relationship with deliberative democratic theory, a strand of democratic thought that stresses that the ideal of a rational consensus should steer public life and deliberation (Karppinen 2009, 57–58).

3 PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM AND ITS CHALLENGES

What does one talk about when one talks about professional journalism? In this work, I define professional journalism as a professional practice of collecting, processing and circulating information and commentary. Journalism presents reports, analyses and critiques about affairs of public significance (Nerone 1995, 157; Schudson 2008, 10–11). Journalism is a practice conducted by professional journalists, typically organized in hierarchical newsrooms and devoted to professional norms and guidelines (Waisbord 2013; Kantola 2016). To be more precise, I talk about professional Western "hegemonic" (Nerone 2015) journalism, which puts heavy emphasis on such professional values as objectivity (Zelizer 2004; Deuze 2005). Although these ideals are widespread especially in the US and Western Europe, it should be stated that these values are not universal. In non-Western countries, journalism can, for example, have a developmental role that sees journalism not as the liberal-democratic watchdog but as an institution that works in tandem with other institutions to achieve common societal goals (Christians et al. 2009, 200–211).

Journalism, as a well-established professional practice, is a rather young institution, dating to the beginning of the 20th century (Schudson 1978; Kaplan 2002). The history of the press and newspapers, however, is much older. As one deals with the question of journalism and democracy, it is useful to explore how the press got entangled with politics. Press historians argue that the roots of modern newspapers lie in the weekly news sheets of the late 16th century Venice and that printed newspapers first appeared in Europe at the beginning of the 17th century (Allan 2004, 10; Barnhurst and Nerone 2008, 18). These early newspapers aimed to serve needs of specific readers, such as business proprietors, and it was not until the 18th century when it became commonplace for newspapers to reach out to a wider audience. The foundations of modern political journalism lie in the bourgeois revolutions of England, France and America that sought to dislodge the absolute rule of the monarchy and which gradually lead to a widening of the democratic franchise (Barnhurst and Nerone 2008, 18; McNair 2008, 238).

The bourgeois upheavals transformed the press. The press was thrown into the turmoil of political struggles, and they became instruments of political argumentation. Newspapers were essential for the newly-born "bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas 1989) – a space between state and the domestic space where the strengthening bourgeoisie could deliberate on issues of common concern. Thus, the history of journalism often reads as a history of empowerment and liberation. Journalism history stresses how publicists, philosophers and journalists fought against state censorship, regulation and controls and for free speech and a free press (McNair 2008; Ward 2011).

By the 19th century, journalism and politics had enmeshed, as newspapers had become a space for argumentation. Both in Britain and in the US, the 1800s witnessed the rise of popular journalism aimed at wide working-class readership (Curran 1978; Schudson 1978; Conboy 2004). Fuelled by industrialization, urbanization and the growing democratic franchise, many of these popular newspapers were campaigning for social change and fostering a sense of partisan togetherness. However, the popular newspapers of the 19th century did lay the foundations for a more objective and politically neutral strand of journalism. This gradual process of "professionalization" saw journalists abandoning the partisan ties of journalism and adopting a more neutral style of reporting.

Journalism scholarship argues that reasons behind professionalization were partly economic. The development of the democratic market society and consumer capitalism in the 19th century created a market for popular newspapers. Newspapers started to serve the mass audiences of growing urban areas with fact-based reporting instead of partisan opinions. This is the case especially with the US, were the affordable "penny press" is seen as a crucial phase in the development of objective journalism (Schudson 1978).[2] Likewise, the radical British press gradually declined in the face of journalism more attuned to the political preferences of the growing middle-class. As journalism was gradually liberated from state control and became more independent from political forces, it grew dependent on market funding. This led journalism to steer clear from political radicalism and adopt a more moderate political stance that would make journalism accessible to an audience as wide as possible (Conboy 2004).

The emergence of professional journalism was therefore partly due to the increasing commodification of news. The birth of professional norms and the journalistic style of writing worked to make the production of news more efficient (Chalaby 1998; Waisbord 2013, 26). As journalism had economic interests to serve, the idea of journalism as the independent "watchdog" or "fourth estate" – which would monitor the powerful on behalf of the people – worked to legitimatize journalism in the eyes of the public (Boyce 1978; Conboy 2004; Waisbord 2013, 98).

Professionalization worked to enhance the prestige of journalism. Large segments of the public held a negative view about journalism, due to sensationalism and overt partisanship – both characteristic of 19th century popular press. Towards the end of the 19th century, efforts to improve the social status of journalism gained foothold as the first press clubs and unions were established to foster a sense of professionalism (Waisbord 2013, 22–25). In societies going through large-scale transformations, such as rapid urbanization and modernization, many professions organized and mobilized

[2] It should be noted that this is a somewhat controversial storyline. Nerone (1987) has argued that the popular "mythology" paints a somewhat misleading picture of the penny press, as, for example, political partisanism was present in the penny papers.

to strengthen professional autonomy and harvest social respect. Journalism was no exception. Journalists started to define a public service mission for themselves: to serve the people and democracy. This required independence not only from partisan goals and the state but from vested economic interests as well. A new shared set of professional ethics and norms was meant to raise journalists into an autonomous position and shield them from the corroding effects of both politics and the market (Kaplan 2002; Hallin 2008).

The aspiration to reach the status of professional independence emerged in an intellectual climate in which criticisms were hurled towards democracy, politics and the press. Especially in the US, the reach for professional autonomy was affected by the early 20th century Progressive critique of political parties and ideology (Schudson 1978, 158–159; Waisbord 2013, 28). The overtly tribal and corrupted nature of mass party politics was in danger of undercutting the very principles of democratic market societies. Instead of partisan politics, the answer to societal woes would lie in a more scientific model of administration and a more elitist form of democracy (Schudson 1978, 158–159, Waisbord 2013, 28). Progressive reformers believed that societal problems and class conflicts could be managed by impassionate professionals and technical expertise (Kaplan 2010, 34). These ideas are reflected in professional journalistic values of public interest and objectivity. The journalist would have to stand between "politicians and the public to guarantee that the populace would not be manipulated by the politician's cynical words" (Kaplan 2002, 141).

The consolidation of professional journalism during early 20th century intertwines with wide-spread disillusionment with idea of the "marketplace of ideas". In the marketplace of ideas, rational individuals would, as classical liberal thought had it, choose from competing arguments, and the outcome of this process would promote the common good (Nerone 1995, 43). However, multiple developments made it clear that the marketplace of ideas was too dangerous a place to be left to work without regulation and professional oversight. The challenge that both socialism and fascism presented to liberal market societies during the first decades of the 20th century sparked fears that a mob rule might replace the reasonable public (Schudson 1978). The commercial newspapers of the time were deemed as feeding the stereotypes and prejudices of people instead of being a space for rational and critical debate (Nerone 2015, 320).

These concerns were fuelled by various factors. The efficiency of propaganda used in World War I led to the realization that mass media carried tremendous manipulative potential. The rise of the public relations industry made it clear that the public sphere was increasingly used for cynical manipulation and profit-seeking (Schudson 1978). Overall, the mood of the times was marked by a growing criticism towards democratic ideals. It was unreasonable to think that the public would consist of "omnicompetent" (Lippmann [1927] 1993, 29) citizens that would have the time or resources to

form enlightened opinions on the different aspects of an industrial mass society characterized by ever-increasing complexity.

The professionalization of journalism was a response to these concerns. The 20th century journalists became information professionals who would manage the public debate on current affairs and verify the value and accuracy of utterances before they reached the mass public (Nerone 1995, 51–52; Kaplan 2010; 34–35). Journalism adopted the norm of "social responsibility" that would curb the excesses of market based public communication (Barnhurst and Nerone 2008, 22; McQuail 1992, 37–48). In this compromise, journalists got the status of autonomous professionals. Owners agreed to let the new norms of professionalism override profit-maximizing to stave off public criticism towards media power and avoid drastic means of state regulation (Nerone 2012, 450).

During the 20th century, the ideal of a socially responsible press committed to the public interest was enforced by media policy on both sides of the Atlantic. The Hutchins Commission in the US in 1947 and the Royal Commission on the Press in the UK in 1949 argued that the press should provide a "truthful" and "intelligent" account of current affairs and "instruct the public on the main issues of the day" (McQuail 1992, 37–41). Moreover, public service broadcasting – which has, especially in Europe, played a major part in the distribution of news to mass audiences – was given birth by the realization that governments need to regulate the media (e.g. Mills 2016).

Gradually, these features came to characterize Western journalism during the 20th century. Without a doubt, there are differences between Western media systems and journalistic cultures (Hallin and Mancini 2004), but these should be considered as variations, not as radical deviations, from the Anglo-American style of journalism that has strived for professional autonomy from politics and the market. Indeed, journalists over the Western world still subscribe to the rather traditional values characteristic of Anglo-American hegemonic journalism (Hanitzsch 2011; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016; Riedl 2018; Vos and Wolfgang 2018), and no alternative dominant paradigm has come to replace this ideal type.

This is not to say that the standard values of professional Western journalism would have gone unchallenged or unchanged. On the contrary, journalism history shows how journalist and journalism scholars have questioned and criticized some of basic tenets of professional journalism. For example, the "public" and "citizen" journalism movements have challenged the "fortress" (Nordenstreng 1995, 118) of professional journalism, which, according to the critics, is deeply interwoven with power centres of societies and neglectful of the civil society and activist organizations (see Rosen 2000; Hanitzsch 2007; Christians et al. 2009, 186–190).

It is important to note that the standard characterization of professional journalism by no means covers the entire field of journalism. Core journalistic values, such as the idea that the journalists can produce "objective" representations about the world, have been in a constant state of flux since the

advent of professional journalism. Scholars as well as journalists have been critical and sceptical towards these ideals (Tuchman 1978; Schudson 1978). The "new journalism" movement gave birth to a more adversarial type of reporting amid the political upheavals and the adversarial culture of the 1960s and 1970s (Schudson 1978, 187–188; Wien 2005; Muhlmann 2010, 189–190). It was critical of the neutral posture of what was considered appropriate professional journalism. New journalism was critical towards professional values of objectivity and neutrality, which were serving the authoritative social elites and conservative values. Moreover, as the stable professional identity of the mid-20th century journalist has gradually declined and made way for journalism more attuned to the flexible nature of contemporary societies, journalists have become increasingly sceptical towards the values and structures of high-modernist journalism and developed a mindset critical of established sources of authority (Kantola 2012).

However, despite these changes and the obvious diversification of journalism, the core values of professional journalism are still very much in the heart of the professional identity and ideology of journalists (Deuze 2005). Western journalists subscribe to classic professional values and make use of them in their daily work. Indeed, there seems to be something enduring about the hegemonic form of journalism. The idea of "professional Western journalism" is reminiscent of a Weberian "ideal type" (Weber 1949, 90), an idealized characterization that captures the key elements of unique historical configurations and phenomena, in this case journalism. Therefore, the ideal type of professional journalism should not be seen a means of capturing the whole range and multiplicity of what journalism is, but as a tool to dissect some of "the essential characteristics" (Calhoun et al. 2012, 270) of professional journalism. These characteristics still seem to play a major role in the profession. The idea about professional journalism is therefore a construction necessary for the analysis of the societal and democratic significance of journalism.

It is equally important to note that the ideal typical and hegemonic form of Western journalism was given birth by a certain historical conjuncture. The political, economic and technological cornerstones of this conjuncture have not remained unchanged. Politically, the challenges faced by the post-World War II social democratic consensus have fragmented the mass public (Hallin 2006). Technologically, the 20th century media system was supported by information scarcity and a lack of popular alternatives to newspapers and broadcasting. Therefore, during its golden age, it was easier for journalism to bridge the gap between the public service mission and market demands. Journalism was a lucrative business opportunity as well as a critical watchdog with public service functions (Curran 2007).

The early 20th-century media landscape, to a large extent, was regulated within nation states. However, globalization, fuelled by technological advances and the increasingly international nature of production chains, also affected the media landscape (Nerone 1995, 159–176). In the 1980s, advances in

satellite and cable technologies started to challenge the environment of information scarcity (Christians et al. 2009, 15). Confined national audiences made room for fragmenting groups of media consumers with divergent, global media diets. Meanwhile, the commodification of media and journalism accelerated amid global competition. Finally, the Internet smashed the gatekeeper position of journalism and plunged its business model into difficulties as the public was presented with endless alternatives to professional journalism. In a situation characterised by increasing competition, it has become difficult to subscribe to the democratic mission of socially responsible professional journalism while maintaining a highly profitable business. This tension is reflected in well-established concerns over the future of critical journalism in difficult economic environments (McChesney 2003; Schudson 2005; Christians et al. 2009, 225–225).

These tendencies have been fuelled by media policy approaches that have emphasized deregulation in the name of competition and innovation. This has meant an end to the nationally regulated media landscape (Christians et al. 2009, 15). Of course, it is reasonable to argue that a plurality of channels and options creates a more diverse political public sphere where rulers and elites are being forced under intense public scrutiny (McNair 2000). It is, however, evident that media policy has failed to curb the power of the media and tech companies – largely in charge of our daily media use (Freedman 2018). This has had eroding effects on the political public sphere. It has helped to build a media system that, in its fervour desire for clicks and views, favours populist styles of political communication (Jutel 2019b; Moffitt 2019). One extreme example was the US cable channels for whom the spectacle of the Donald Trump campaign proved to be an economic boost (Picard 2018).

Indeed, these developments have raised pressing questions about the relationship between journalism and democracy. How does journalism fulfil its democratic roles amid a market squeeze and in a media environment laden with options and content creators, many of whom circumvent any notions of journalistic professionalism? Rising political antagonisms and grievances have eroded public trust not only on politicians and experts but on journalists as well (Davies 2018). The populist revolt and distrust of traditional forms of truth-telling together with an abundance of online content are, allegedly, adding up to an era of "post-truth", an epistemic crisis that is in danger of eroding any base of shared reality and democratic discourse (Dahlgren 2018). Thus, it is increasingly important to analyse the democratic and political role that journalism can and should have.

4 DEMOCRACY AND JOURNALISM

The idea that journalism plays an essential role in a well-functioning democracy has been central for both journalism and journalism history for centuries (Zelizer 2012). The notion that journalism serves democratic governance dates to the 17th and 18h centuries and to the revolutionary struggles between monarchies and early forms of parliamentarianism (McNair 2008, 238). As the democratic franchise gradually gained foothold, the public sphere became a place for deliberation and argumentation on political issues (Habermas 1989). Early journalism started to liberate itself from state control and became a means of publicly articulating differentiating demands about the future of a democratic society.

Ever since the late 19th century and with the emergence of professional journalism, journalism has seen itself as a guardian of democracy (Waisbord 2013, 43). Journalism is central in facilitating public opinion and making democratic governance, based on popular consent, possible. A democracy is dependent on a well-informed citizenship, and it is up to journalism to provide the people with accurate and reliable information based on which to make informed political decisions (McNair 2008, 238). Ideally, journalism should provide the public with relevant and diverse information (Nielsen 2017). Moreover, journalism is often trusted with the critical "watchdog" or "fourth estate" role of monitoring the political decision-makers and signalling the public about elite wrongdoings (Conboy 2004; Schudson 2008; Hampton 2010). However, to understand the multiple democratic roles that journalism is given, it is useful to go through some aspects of the very notion of democracy.

4.1 ON THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy refers to the idea that "all power in society is rooted in the people and that government is accountable to the people" (Trappel 2011, 14). What this means in practice, is a question of vast theoretical discussions and political debates (e.g. Christians el al. 2009). For example, to what extent should powerful technocratic institutions elemental to governing advanced capitalist societies – such as central banks – be opened to democratic demands and public deliberation? Or to what extent should elements of democratic decision-making be applied to the governance and everyday functions of such institutions as schools or workplaces? Is democracy merely a means of electing the governing elites? Is it unrealistic to assume that most people in democratic societies would have the resources or the interest to participate in policy debates that often require detailed expert knowledge?

How should we examine the democratic functions of journalism? Should the democratic role of journalism be to alert the public about the possible wrongdoings of elites and democratically elected decision-makers and ensure that our institutions are run by responsible people? Should journalism drive social change or remain detached from political struggles? Should journalists aim to facilitate debates about the details of, for example, monetary policy and question the very idea that certain aspects of social life are too difficult and complex to be subjected to democratic debates? Should journalism committed to democratic values foster political conflicts or seek to build a consensus?

Bearing these questions in mind, it is hardly surprising that democracy as well as the role of journalism in democratic societies have been conceptualized from various perspectives (e.g. Strömbäck 2005; Christians et al. 2009). However, for the purposes of this thesis and to understand the various democratic roles that professional journalism is often given in contemporary societies, it is enough to compare the liberal-elitist model, the deliberative model and the agonistic model of democracy (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015).

The liberal or liberal-elitist model of democracy stresses that political decisions are made by competent and well-informed elites who are elected by the people (Trappel 2011, 16). Most people do not have the necessary expertise or interest to participate in managing public affairs and, therefore, people need to elect competent elites to address popular concerns in such democratic bodies as the parliament. In the liberal model, society is thought of as consisting of competing groups and interests, while power is fragmented and diffused. The part and parcel of democratic decision-making, taking place primarily through elections, is to decide the leaders, rules and policies that correspond with the most widely held preferences (Trappel 2011, 16; Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1044). While it is acknowledged that different groups pursue their own sectional interests, the political system works for the whole of the society (Hardy 2014, 39). Parliaments and governments – whose composition accurately reflects the heterogeneity of contemporary societies – can solve disputes and build consensuses (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1044).

The deliberative democracy model is critical of the elitist emphasis of the liberal model. Those advocating for the deliberative model stress that any consensus should arise from a critical and pluralist deliberation among the people. Citizens should participate in disputes and critical debates over common problems. This facilitates a reasoned public opinion that can guide decision-makers in reaching a consensus (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1045). This line of thought owes to Jürgen Habermas' (1989) famous conceptualization on the "public sphere" as a space for an open, rational and critical deliberation on common issues. Habermas argued that a public sphere gradually emerged in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries as monarchical power started to make room for capitalist market relations and the rising bourgeoisie class. It was in these settings where the bourgeoisie started to

debate and deliberate on issues of common concern in coffee houses, clubs and via early forms of the press. Through reasoned and open argumentation, these debates led to the formation of a public opinion. The deliberative model of democracy stresses that political decisions should stem from discussions that are committed to such values as rationality, impartiality and equality among the participants (Strömbäck 2005, 336). In an ideal situation, deliberative discussions should be part and parcel of daily life and take place not only in the media or the parliament but in ordinary life as well (ibid., 336).

The agonistic model is critical of the consensual undertones present both in the liberal-elitist and deliberative forms of democracy (Mouffe 2009; 2013). The agonistic perspective is rooted in radical democratic theory. Radical democracy, as envisaged by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014), stresses that not consensus but the multiplicity of conflicts that exists in societies is the essence of democratic politics. A radical democratic political project therefore consists of linking together different democratic struggles – whether they are, for example, feminist, anti-capitalist or anti-racist – to form alliances that can challenge oppression (Fenton 2016).

Indeed, proponents of the agonistic model state that the search for consensus signals a failure to see the ultimately antagonistic character of any democratic society (Karppinen 2007; Mouffe 2009). Conflicts and political differences that cannot be bridged are inherent to all social life. The proponents of the agonistic model state that every consensus exists as a "stabilization of power" (Mouffe 1989, 756) that temporarily renders certain ideas as objective viewpoints that seem to represent the common good. As the formation of any consensus always includes acts of exclusion (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1046), seeking consensuses is not only in vain but ultimately even dangerous. Proponents of this view argue that democratic debates should be debates between "adversaries" who differ radically on politics but share an "adhesion to ethico-political principles of democracy" (Mouffe 1989, 755). Should the political system be deprived of different democratic identities with which to identify, the confrontations are in risk of turning into battles "over essentialist identities and non-negotiable moral values" (ibid., 756). Thus, democratic contestations become struggles between "enemies" who seek to destroy each other (Mouffe 2009). Therefore, the goal of democratic politics should not be consensus but, on the contrary, the fostering of political differences and ideological cleavages. This is needed in order to tame "antagonisms" into "agonisms" which – despite their conflictual and unbridgeable character – are characterized by a devotion to democratic principles of "liberty and equality for all" (Mouffe 2013, 7).

4.2 THE DEMOCRATIC ROLES OF JOURNALISM

With the help of this brief look on different conceptualizations of democracy, one can start to discern the different democratic roles that journalism is often

given. The democratic role ascribed to journalism is a mixture of different norms and ideals. One can identify traces of different democratic models from the practice of professional journalism.

Journalism is often given a monitorial and a representative role in democratic societies. This role entails various elements. Monitorial journalism is to work as the public "watchdog" who monitors the exercise of power and signals the public if decision-makers or the powerful are behaving dishonestly (Curran 2007; McNair 2008, 17). Moreover, journalism represents the divergent views and concerns that the people have and works as a mediator between the public and governing elites. Journalism provides the "flow of information" (Strömbäck 2005, 332) between the government and the people. The people are provided with accurate information and analyses about issues of public significance to help them make informed decisions and sound political choices (Schudson 2008, 12). At the same time, the government is made aware of any public concerns or disputes so they can then be dealt with by political institutions (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1045). Here, journalism aligns closely with the liberal-elitist tradition of democratic thought.

Indeed, journalism has a crucial role to play in a liberal democracy in which elites elected by the people are trusted with vast decision-making powers (Christians et al. 2009, 145). It is therefore vital that journalism detaches itself from vested interests to provide the public with diverse and unbiased information. To function as the independent and diverse marketplace of ideas, journalism should be organized by market forces. Liberal media theory sees a media system independent of government control and organized by competitive markets as vital to a critical public sphere that can hold the government and political rulers accountable (McNair 2000, Curran 2002).

More in line with deliberative tradition of democratic theory, journalism is also given a facilitative role (Trappel 2001, 20; Christians et al. 2009, 158–179). Instead of being merely the transmission belt between the public and various institutions, journalism should facilitate and promote active citizenship and participation in public life. Journalism should foster civic action and not only transmit expert and elite thought to a passive public. Journalism is thus an essential part of the public sphere where consensus is constructed via a rational and critical debate. In addition to informing the public or alerting the government about pressing societal issues or concerns, journalism "helps to develop a shared moral framework for community and society" (Christians et al. 2009, 126). In short, journalism should help to improve the quality of public life.

Deliberative theorists are often sceptical of market-oriented media (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1046). It is thought that media that works to serve market interests undermines the conditions of critical and pluralist media. It privileges cheap "sensationalism" (McQuail 1992, 310) over reasoned political content and fails to critically scrutinize corporate power. Thus, market-based journalism needs to be accompanied with public-service

journalism and media policies that support journalism independent of market forces.

Third, journalism is also given a radical role in democratic societies. This entails not only the role of the critical watchdog devoted to raising consciousness on elite wrongdoings or pressing issues. In the radical role, journalist can also be a change agent devoted to challenging dominant political forces (Christians et al. 2009, 179), claiming a position often somewhat alien to the politically detached professional journalist. Those who see that journalism should play a more radical societal role often criticize such fundamental virtues of professional journalism as objectivity. It is claimed that they work to reinforce a static understanding of society where the boundaries of political and ideological pluralism are set by mainstream political players and experts (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2017). Although professional journalism is devoted to the idea of reflecting a large variety of differing opinions, it essentially offers ideological plurality within certain ideological limits (Karppinen 2018), as views and opinions that go against the status quo are deemed as out of bounds. Therefore, journalism should foster ideological contestation (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015, 1046–1047).

It is safe to say that journalism is a mixture of these democratic functions. It is not an easy task to draw clear-cut boundaries between different democratic roles. When does, for example, critical monitorial journalism turn into radical journalism that has a social agenda (Trappel 2001, 20)? Moreover, national and regional differences in journalistic and political cultures need to be considered while dissecting the democratic roles of journalism. Although professional journalism is an "Anglo-American invention" (Chalaby 1996) that has gradually become the hegemonic form of journalism in the Western world, there are differences in journalistic cultures within the West. The media systems in the UK and especially in the US are built on the idea that a market-based media system will ensure freedom of the press and a pluralist journalistic field, while in continental Europe, the state – via public service broadcasting and media subsidies, for example – has been seen as crucial in fostering a critical-pluralist public sphere (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Moreover, journalists and political parties are traditionally more closely aligned in Southern Europe than in Northern Europe or in the US, meaning that there are differences in how detached journalists consider themselves to be from partisan and ideological struggles (ibid.).

There are, however, unifying values as well. Many Western journalists subscribe to the idea that journalist is the "detached watchdog" (Hanitzsch 2011, 485) of a democratic society. This ideal largely coincides with liberal notions on democracy. Many journalists see that they should provide citizens with information needed to make political decisions and keep an eye on the political and economic elites (Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, Riedl 2018). Here, journalists see themselves more as transmitters of accurate information and public watchdogs than as radical change agents or facilitators of civic participation. At the same time, however, it is evident that since the heyday of

the high-modernist period, journalism has become more opinionated, adversarial and critical towards established sources of expertise and authority (Hallin 2006; Baym 2009; Kantola 2012). Indeed, the democratic function of journalism is by no means a clear-cut matter.

Significant criticism has been presented against these grand claims about journalism's democratic role. It is argued that normative assumptions about journalism's democratic functions are simply too out of touch with newsroom realities. Thus, we should tone down our expectations. It is not realistic to assume that journalism, operating in a digitalizing and fragmenting media ecology and under diminishing economic resources and strict deadlines, could play the heroic role often envisaged by journalism scholarship. Therefore, we should be satisfied if journalism provides "people with relatively accurate, accessible, diverse, relevant and timely independently produced information about public affairs" (Nielsen 2017, 1252). Moreover, scholars might resort to similar idealizations when it comes to the very idea of democracy. The public is easily valorised as virtuous community driven by a desire to democratic participation and deliberation. It is easy to overlook the fact that often, the public, busy with daily life and personal issues, might volunteer to take a more passive political role than envisaged by scholars enthusiastic about a democratically active people (see Lippmann 1993 [1927]).

Taking this into account, it is no surprise that the critical scholarship often points out how the public is being held "hostage" (Muhlmann 2010, 12) by wicked journalists in the service of the powerful. Journalists deprive the people of a pluralist public sphere and fail to serve their democratic needs. Critical journalism scholarship has a long history in illustrating how professional journalism – despite claims for autonomy and the declaration of democratic ideals – serves the needs of a powerful few and stifles democratic debate. Media logics – characterized by a moderate political stance calibrated to speak to a mass consumer audience – work to render journalism hostile towards ideas that are too radical or too out of touch with the parameters of dominant opinion (Curran 1978; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Conboy 2004). Critical political economy scholars emphasize that the media market is, like any industry, geared towards profit maximization. This is an imperative that is in danger of overriding any democratic values (Hardy 2014). The cutbacks in newsrooms and commercialization of journalistic culture, in the face of increasing competition and technological innovations, have accelerated these anti-democratic tendencies, as journalistic values are under market attacks (McChesney 2003). Moreover, the values and practices of professional journalism, such as dependency on elite sources, work to legitimize certain political positions as authoritative and marginalize others (Tuchman 1978; Hallin 1984). The boundaries of journalistic debate are constructed by the "primary definers" (Hall et al. 1978, 57), people who allegedly possess the greatest authority on the issue. In economic policy debates, for example, this refers to political and administrative elites, economists, market analysts and

financiers (Chakravartty and Schiller, 2010; Harjuniemi et al. 2015; Basu 2018).

4.3 ANALYSING JOURNALISM'S DEMOCRATIC PERFORMANCE

As it has become commonplace to deem journalism an essential part of Western democracies, it is hardly surprising that these assumptions have come to dominate journalism scholarship as well (Zelizer 2012). While journalism is essential in supporting the foundations of democracy, journalism scholarship is needed to assess whether journalists fulfil their democratic obligations. But how can we examine whether journalism does this?

First, the emergence of bias in political communication is considered a problem (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2017, 653). It is argued that the balance norm of journalism requires journalism to present the perspectives of both sides in disputes (Entman 1989, 30). This necessitates a lack of bias. A political initiative from a left-wing party or a labour union to raise government spending, for example, should be handled in a balanced fashion, meaning that the journalist needs to reach out to a right-wing party or employer union for comment. If journalism fails to give a balanced view of the political initiative at hand and favours left-wing voices, coverage can be considered biased and therefore unprofessional. From a democracy perspective, biased journalism is dangerous, as it distorts the workings of the marketplace of ideas where the public should have equal access to differing ideas and viewpoints.

However, making the lack of bias or the balance norm the sheer criteria for democratic journalism is not enough. Journalism scholars have repeatedly shown how professional journalism is dependent on the most powerful people in society (Tuchman 1978; Hall et al. 1978: Mills 2016). This is certainly understandable. News professionals are dependent on the most authoritative sources of information – politicians, officials, various experts and others – in order to carry out their work. However, when a consensus on foreign on economic policy, for example, prevails among the political elite and no alternative ideas emerge from within this cadre, the consensus is reflected by the lack of dissenting ideas in journalistic representations (Hallin 1984; Lounasmeri 2017). Therefore, a lack of bias should not be the sole criterion for democratic journalism.

Another criterion for democratic journalism is the plurality of actors given space to voice their opinions. Journalism should reflect the heterogeneity of societies by giving room to a variety of voices to advance deliberation between different groups and actors. By giving voice to a wide range of societal actors – from politicians to the civil society organization and the common people – pluralist journalism helps to nurture debates on common problems. Journalism should give space to those groups and people who, due to such

structural factors as economic inequalities, do not enjoy the same level of media access as the more dominant societal groups (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015; 1053–1054).

When addressing the journalistic representations of European austerity, the plurality of the austerity coverage is certainly an issue of utmost importance. Did professional journalism work to foster a pluralist, critical debate on the issue of austerity by giving space to a variety of voices? However, critics have pointed out that journalism often offers a certain sanitized version of ideological pluralism, within certain politico-ideological limits that rule out ideas that would endanger the status quo or the existing political consensus (Glasser et al. 2009; Karppinen 2018). So, instead of merely analysing the plurality of voices of the austerity debate, the level of ideological contestation needs to be considered as well. Did professional journalism discuss European austerity as a natural and common-sense response beyond reasonable doubt, or did it, address differing ideological perspectives and varying solutions. Did journalism work to foster ideological contestation or did it address austerity as a common sense solution to the crisis?

5 ECONOMIC CRISIS, AUSTERITY AND JOURNALISM

To understand the democratic performance of professional journalism amid the austerity debate, it is necessary to briefly go through the developments that led up to the euro crisis – a crisis that was triggered in 2010 by the widespread market panic concerning the public deficits of Greece (Patomäki 2013). The euro crisis has had tremendous economic and political consequences. Economically, the crisis locked Europe into a prolonged period of low economic growth and high unemployment. This was felt especially in the eurozone countries most hit by the downturn and fiscal austerity, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Cyprus and Portugal. While Greece's unemployment rate stood at 12 % in 2010, the country reached a record high of 27.9 % in 2013.[3] Between 2007 and 2014, the Greek economy contracted by 26 %.[4] In addition to burdening European countries, the crisis was an existential threat to common currency. To calm the financial market, it took the famous promise from the President of the European Central Bank (ECB), Mario Draghi, in 2012 to do "whatever it takes" (Draghi 2012) to preserve the common currency. Draghi made it clear that the central bank would ultimately provide the necessary liquidity for indebted eurozone members.

Moreover, the crisis reshuffled the political landscape of Europe. This can be seen in the challenges faced by many mainstream parties in, for example, France, Italy, Greece, Spain and even Germany. The austerity measures and widespread social and economic hardship paved way for a populist backlash against established political forces. Such left-wing parties as Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece stem from the resentment against austerity measures. Another backlash emerged as well. The EU, ECB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailed out troubled eurozone member countries via different loan arrangements. This resulted in a right-wing reaction against the common currency. In the right-wing narrative, the eurozone is essentially a mechanism of transferring tax-payer money from the prudential North into the profligate South. The rise of such Eurosceptic right-wing forces as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party is a sign of a right-wing euro criticism triggered by the management of the euro crisis (Slobodian and Plehwe 2019).

The euro crisis stems from two intertwining factors. First, the euro crisis is a part of the global financial crisis. This was launched by the trouble in the US housing market in 2007-8. The global financial crisis was essentially a result of a steady build-up of global economic imbalances and private sector

[3] *Euronews* 20.8.2018 "Greek Bailout: The economy before and after" (https://www.euronews.com/2018/08/20/greek-bailout-the-economy-before-and-after)

[4] *Financial Times* 20.9.2019 "Greek economy shows promising signs of growth" (https://www.ft.com/content/b42ee1ac-4a27-11e9-bde6-79eaea5acb64)

indebtedness. The crisis has its roots in the breakdown of the post-World War II Bretton Woods regime, used to regulate global capital flows and currency fluctuations (Tooze 2018). Gradually, the Bretton-Woods system became unsustainable, largely due to the large deficit in the US trade balance and was effectively ended by Richard Nixon's 1971 announcement of the cancellation of the direct convertibility of US dollar to gold. Combined with economic globalization – undercutting the bargaining position of organized labour and thus wage growth – this period of deregulated finance led to rising levels of private indebtedness, especially in the US (Varoufakis 2013).

Second, the euro crisis is a result of the structural issues of the eurozone. In Europe, the crisis left banks awash with worthless assets. The situation was made more difficult by the fundamentals of the common currency. Before the crisis, the common currency had fuelled the flows of capital into peripheral eurozone countries, contributing not only to rapid economic growth but also to the build-up of significant private debt bubbles. As the financial crisis grinded economic activity to a halt and the indebted banks had to be bailed-out by the governments, the crisis countries had to resort to the ECB, IMF and the EU for financial assistance. The membership in the common currency had stripped eurozone countries of much of their economic sovereignty (the printing presses and national currencies). When the financial markets declined to fund troubled governments, crisis countries were therefore left with loan agreements that came with strict conditions of fiscal austerity. This is essentially how a crisis fuelled by high levels of private sector debt mutated into a sovereign debt crisis that was tackled through austerity (Blyth 2015). Ultimately, five eurozone member countries – Greece, Spain, Ireland, Cyprus and Spain – went through the controversial bail-out programs. Deemed necessary by European political leaders to regain the lost market trust and economic competitiveness (Borriello 2017), the austerity measures sparked political protests and saw prominent economists criticizing the EU's austerity approach as reckless and counter-productive (e.g. Krugman 2011).

But why austerity? When the financial crisis and paralysis of the global financial markets system took the global economy to the brink of a total meltdown in 2008–9, political decision-makers all over the world resorted to stimulus policies to boost economic activity. The US as well as Europe were suddenly favouring Keynesian policy ideas. For a while, it looked as if the crisis would deliver a paradigm shift in dominant economic policy ideas after decades of neoliberal austerity and financial deregulation (Blyth 2015, Whiteside 2016). Even the IMF, traditionally a bastion of fiscal austerity and free market ideas, came out in favour of coordinated measures of fiscal stimulus, and nation states from China and US to Germany, the UK and Spain engaged in stimulus spending to combat the economic downturn (Blyth 2015, 55–56).

However, a shift to austerity took place in 2010. This was due to various factors. Germany, the largest eurozone economy and the most important player in European economic policymaking, started to argue that spending

had to make room for fiscal discipline (Blyth 2015, 61). This echoed a historical, deep-rooted German economic policy ideology according to which budgetary discipline and international competitiveness are the most important drivers of economic prosperity (Brunnermeir et al. 2016). The German austerity stance was backed by the then ECB president Jean Claude Trichet, who in 2010 argued that the rapid growth of public debt had to be combated with fiscal consolidation (Trichet 2010).

This narrative quickly started to dominate not only the debate on the euro crisis but European economic policymaking as well. Scholars have identified the leading role that Germany played in the crisis management as the key initiator of collective policy measures (Hennessy 2013; Krampf 2014; Meiers 2015). The austerity approach was dominant not only in the crisis countries that had to go through the programs of fiscal austerity and competitiveness-enhancing structural reforms. Governments in countries such as the UK (non-euro member that was not put in a squeeze by the financial markets) also started to implement austerity measures to reduce public expenditure and ensure market confidence (Basu 2018).

Several interwoven factors played a role in the austerity drive. Macroeconomics certainly played a part. Some prominent economists made the argument to European decision-makers that the benefits of spending cuts would offset any recessionary effects that austerity would have on aggregate demand (Helgadóttir 2016). The allure of austerity was in part due to political opportunism. The argument about the need for austerity was an efficient strategy to justify controversial policies and reforms (Jabko 2013; Stanley 2014). However, it should be noted that it was not only centre-right politicians like the German chancellor Angela Merkel who were the cheerleaders of austerity; the European social democrats largely accepted austerity as well (Bremer 2018).

Further, the economic constitution of Europe played a role in the austerity drive. Memberships in the EU and in the common currency work to discipline membership states to pursue fiscal discipline via setting limits on public debt and deficits (Blyth 2015). Particularly the eurozone works to limit the possibilities of economic policymaking, as eurozone members are stripped of a central bank and a monetary policy through which to offset the negative effects of economic downturns or shocks.

Whatever the main reason, from 2010 onwards, austerity emerged as the main tool of combatting the economic crisis. How journalism represented the policies of austerity is a theme of this thesis. Did journalism work to foster a pluralist and critical debate on European austerity measures, or did it, alternatively, work to enforce the narrative on the necessity of austerity?

These are still important questions. Despite the popularity of various social media platforms, economic issues and policy debates are still common in mainstream journalistic platforms. Although people tend to get their news online to a growing extent, traditional news organisations have a strong presence in digital media spheres. News circulated on social media is often

produced by professional journalists working for well-established news media. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the mainstream news media was a key factor in orchestrating how the financial crisis and politics of austerity unfolded in the eyes and minds of the British public (Berry 2019).

To put it simply, citizens know what is going on in the economy by consuming journalistic representations of economic issues. Of course, many people feel the very material effects of economic recessions, for example, but it is via journalism that most people get their information about the workings of the economy. Is the national economic output growing? What about imports, exports and unemployment? What are the reasons behind economic downturns or, alternatively, economic prosperity? Facts and views on the economy are presented to the public by professional journalists with the help of economic data, economists, market analysts and other experts. Research has indicated that there are connections between journalistic coverage of the economy and public sentiments about economic policy issues (see Sanders and Gavin 2004).

It is safe to say that in contemporary societies, the economy is very much "mediatized" (Phelan 2007, 32) as politicians, officials, bankers, CEOs and others seek to control market actors' expectations via media. Think of a modern central banker who via the international press manages the expectations and actions of international bond market investors and private consumers by committing to a policy of low or high interest rates. Take, for instance, the prime minister who again via media seeks to reassure the market that the country is committed to budgetary discipline and structural reforms.

Importantly for this thesis, professional journalism is also a space where economic policy decisions are legitimised by providing public rationalisations for chosen policy measures (Schranz and Eisenegger 2011; Mylonas 2012). Thus, journalism is very much a site where consent to the social order is produced (Carragee 1993). In this field, actors present different interpretations of economic phenomena and provide justifications for different policy alternatives. Not only does journalism transmit economic facts from experts to the public, but it also allows certain definitions of economic phenomena to resonate and plays down alternative interpretations (Doudaki et al. 2019). For example, instead of merely reflecting an economic crisis, journalism works to construct it as a shared phenomenon that necessitates certain policies and decisions.

Of course, and despite the staying power of traditional news organisation, it is reasonable to question the salience of the standard critical perspective—that mainstream journalism is a means of producing the social order—when the field of political communication is in a state of flux (see Davis 2019). Professional journalism's economic difficulties, declining media trust, rising political conflicts and abundant digital media cast doubt on the notion that professional journalism can enshrine consensus and ensure the dominance of elite and expert ideas in the eyes of the mass public. Indeed, journalism scholarship has reflected on whether the differences between the mediated

representations of the economy and the experiences of ordinary citizens in deindustrialised parts of the UK and US partly explain the scale of the shock Brexit and Trump caused in public discourse (Davis 2018, 167).

Scholars, therefore, have argued that alternative views on media and power are needed. Increasing attention has been paid to analysing how journalism, particularly forms of international financial journalism, functions as an arena for inter-elite communication and conflict management (Davis 2003). High-profile economic journalistic outlets such as *The Financial Times* are elite spheres in which the global decision-making class comes together to discuss the challenges facing the global economy and to forge a consensus on the desired policy goals (Ojala 2017). The financial media is a network through which economy policy narratives, for instance, supporting free-market economics and light-touch financial regulation are circulated within transnational elites. Davis (2011) argues that during the decades building up to the financial crisis, these narratives fuelled 'finanzialisation', a process in which financial sector and various financial instruments have come to play growing roles in the economy and various sectors of society (see Davis and Walsh 2017).

So, how should one think of the democratic role of journalism during an economic crisis, and how should journalism cover such turbulent events as economic crises? If one subscribes to the idea that professional journalism has certain functions in democratic societies, it is reasonable to argue that journalism should fulfil these functions during economic distress as well. First, if journalism is seen as a marketplace of ideas that should accurately represent social heterogeneity, the role of journalism is to provide the public with various viewpoints about an economic crisis. In addition to providing accurate information and rigorous analysis about the unfolding and characteristics of the crisis, professional journalism should reflect the multitude of diverse views on the economic crisis.

Should one take a more deliberative or facilitative approach, journalism should not merely reflect diverse views about an economic crisis. It should foster a rational debate about the causes of the crisis as well as on the policy responses required by the by crisis. Ideally, the consensus reached in this open debate would lead to a well-informed public opinion, reflected in the policy decisions taken to combat the crisis.

A more agonistic approach would see that the role of journalism amid an economic crisis would be to deconstruct and challenge hegemonic assumptions about the economy and economic policymaking. What signifies a pluralist debate on economic policy is not (merely) the rationality of the arguments but the diversity of ideological viewpoints.

How has journalism represented various economic crises? It is safe to say that, in terms of such democratic values as pluralism and ideological diversity, the picture painted by critical scholarship is rather bleak. The scholarship shows how journalism has not fostered a pluralist debate during economic crises. Instead, it has worked to shield dominant economic policy ideas and

elites from contestation. During the inflammatory period of industrial action in Britain in the 1970s, journalists presented the UK government's economic assumptions as responsible, while the wage claims made by British labour unions were deemed as excessive (Philo et al. 1995, 32–33). The neoliberal turn of the 1970s and 1980s in Britain was rendered a natural part of the modernization of Britain, echoing the Thatcherite narrative about the dangerous excesses of the welfare state and union power (see Hall 1988). Similarly, the *Financial Times* coverage of the currency crisis in Thailand in 1997 advanced ideas that aligned with the austerity and free-market position of the IMF (Durham 2007). The idea that market perspectives should ultimately work as the judge of economic policymaking dominated the coverage of the Swedish economic crisis in the 1990s (Mårtenson 2000, 127–128).

Instead of creating a vibrant space for deliberation on economic policy, professional journalism, it would seem, has worked to legitimate certain ideas. The reasons for this are manifold. Journalists' dependency on elite sources has been well-established by journalism scholarship. To produce news efficiently and in accordance with the professional norms of balance and neutrality, journalists need sources who are considered legitimate and authoritative experts on the issue at hand (Tuchman 1978, Sigal 1986; Berkowitz 2008). In economic policy debates, this refers to political and administrative elites, economists, market analysts and financiers (Chakravartty and Schiller 2010; Basu 2018).

The tendency to favour established sources arguably has been intensified by journalism's economics woes and the diminishing resources allocated to newsrooms, making it increasingly difficult to produce the kind of pluralist journalism that would serve a more multi-voiced democratic debate (McChesney 2003; Hardy 2014). Scholarship has also indicated that journalists sometimes identify such ideas as austerity and free-market reforms with common-sense solutions to economic problems (Phelan 2014). Media scholars have argued that the shifts in the Western political economy since the 1970s have also had impacts on economic news (Davis 2019, 165–166). The post-war Keynesian consensus made room for the privatisation of state industries and deindustrialisation, while consumer credit and financial instruments started to play increasing roles in political and social life. Research on the UK has shown that as the importance of the financial sector grew, economic news became more attuned to the concerns of the financial sector (Philo 1993; Davis 2018). Labour reporting became less common, and financial sector sources and corporate interests started to dominate economic news, contributing to less pluralistic notions about the very essence of the "economy", as well as to more stories hostile to government interventions in economic policy-making (Davis 2019, 166–167).

The financial crisis and the euro crisis have certainly accelerated the media scholarship on journalism and the economic crises. Various scholars have analysed the relationship between professional journalism and the crisis.

From a democracy perspective, the results have thus far been discouraging. Critical scholarship has found that journalism did not rise to its watchdog role before the burst of the global crisis. Financial journalism failed to alert the public about the imbalances and speculative bubbles in the financialized global economy (Barber 2015; O'Brien 2015; Starkman 2015). Mainstream financial journalism in such publications as the *Washington Post* routinely favoured business sources, analysts and public relations professional when covering the pre-crisis financial market, thus focusing the public attention on various business opportunities and investor issues (Knowles et al. 2017). Similarly, multiple journalism scholars have analysed how journalism represented the austerity measures implemented after the outburst of the crisis. This scholarship shows how journalism coalesced around the narrative of necessary austerity. Mainstream journalism – from the US to Britain and Greece – favoured government and other elite sources and failed to produce alternative viewpoints on austerity policies (Mylonas 2012; Tracy 2012; Basu 2018).

6 THE CASE STUDIES

In this thesis, I will analyse the journalistic representations of euro crisis austerity. This dissertation comprises of four individual articles. In the following, section I will give a short introduction to each of the articles and discuss briefly how each article contributes to the thesis. I will address the methodological and theoretical aspects of the articles later in this synopsis chapter.

6.1 ARTICLE 1: MEDIATING THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY: ORDOLIBERAL FRAMING IN EUROPEAN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE EUROZONE CRISIS

Article I analyses the European press coverage of the eurozone crisis with a quantitative frame analysis. The sample includes 7989 newspaper articles from eight European countries between February 2010 and July 2012. The sample includes newspaper articles on the eurozone crisis from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and Finland. This early period of the crisis was, in many ways, vital, as many of the central approaches and mechanisms that characterized the management of the crisis were put in motion. This period included, for example, the eurozone agreement on 100€ billion intervention on Greece as well as various calls from European Central Bank (ECB) and leading Eurozone politicians to austerity.

The starting point for article I is that the German government has played a central role in the management of the euro crisis. From loan agreements to strengthening fiscal coordination among eurozone countries, the German government has been the prime mover of European economic policymaking. The European policy stance has largely fallen in line with the approach favoured by the German government. However, the German positions has not gone unchallenged. The ECB, for example, has in many occasions acted against the will of Germany. The German austerity approach has met severe criticism as well. Therefore, Germany has had to convince the European public and European policymakers of the need for austerity and structural reforms.

Article I argues that the public domain is a central sphere for the construction of policy acceptance. The study analyses to what extent Germany has been able to consolidate its view on the necessity of austerity in the European public sphere. The study argues that the German government has frequently drawn from the German economic policy tradition of ordoliberalism to gain popular support for austerity and supply side reforms. The ordoliberal tradition – which puts adherence to a set of binding rules to the fore of economic policy making – has a major role in the German national narrative concerning the highly-competitive German social market economy.

By ordoliberal framing, the study argues, the German government has constructed an account of the eurozone crisis, which emphasizes loose fiscal discipline and lack of competitiveness as the main sources of the crisis. Accordingly, the ordoliberal frame stresses austerity and structural reforms as the primary treatment recommendations to the crisis.

Article I analyses to what extent the German framing has dominated the European public debate on the eurozone crisis. With a quantitative frame analysis, the study observes whether the ordoliberal frame has dominated the debate and whether a competing Keynesian agenda – emphasizing the structural problems of the eurozone and advocating fiscal stimulus – is reflected in the European public sphere. By analysing the salience of different policy approaches in the European public sphere, article I analyses how pervasive the German-led austerity agenda was in the European press.

6.2 ARTICLE II: ESTABLISHED IDEAS FROM ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS: AUSTERITY AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN THE FINNISH ECONOMIC POLICY DEBATE

Article II analyses the endurance of neoliberal policy ideas in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. The staying power of austerity and endurance of neoliberal policy ideas has challenged the expectations of some political scientists and political economists who have emphasized that major economic crises have accelerated counter-hegemonic policy paradigms. The post-financial crisis conjuncture has, on the contrary, witnessed the persistence of neoliberal ideas and the institutions implementing them.

Taking Finland and the leading Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)* as a case study, article II analyses the relationship between neoliberal policy ideas, economic policy institutions and journalism. With a qualitative approach, the study analyses the Finnish economic policy debate during the financial and euro crises (from 2009 to 2014) and illustrates the interplay between the most powerful economic policy institutions and the mainstream media.

The study examines how the established institutional forces prevent major ideational paradigm shifts even during major economic crises. As the Finnish Ministry of Finance (MoF) and EU institutions such as the ECB started to demand austerity and structural reforms to combat public deficits and debt, journalism quickly followed suit. The political elite coalesced around the consensus formed by the EU and the MoF. This led to a lack of alternative articulations on the preferred stance of economic policy. The study argues that while a strong consensus on issues of economic policymaking prevails among the political elite, journalism has difficulties in producing alternative viewpoints. Thus, instead of fostering a democratic debate on economic policy,

journalism often works to strengthen a post-democratic public sphere, where certain assumptions are shielded from severe political contestation.

6.3 ARTICLE III: REASON OVER POLITICS: THE ECONOMIST'S HISTORICAL FRAMING OF AUSTERITY

Article III analyses the relationship between austerity and journalism from a historical perspective. With a qualitative frame analysis, the study asks how *The Economist* – which exemplifies many of the virtues of professional journalism – has historically addressed the question of austerity during times of economic distress. By pinpointing three historical periods during which austerity was widely debated in the pages of *The Economist*, the study explores whether journalism's framing of austerity has remained the same. The three austerity periods identified by the study are austerity policies in post-World War II Britain, austerity in France in the 1980s, and austerity during the global financial crisis and the euro crisis.

The study shows how journalistic frames can prove to be resilient. Despite the differences between the analysed austerity periods, journalism's framing of austerity policies has remained remarkably intact since the post-Second World War era. *The Economist* has consistently framed austerity as a difficult yet necessary fix to economic problems, caused by economic shocks or politically tempting, yet economically illiterate, ideas. Indeed, article III seeks to the shed light on the historical relationship between professional journalism and powerful economic ideas, such as austerity.

6.4 ARTICLE IV: THE ECONOMIST'S DEPOLITICIZATION OF EUROPEAN AUSTERITY AND THE CONSTITUTION OF A 'EUPHEMIZED' NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSE

Article IV moves to analyse how *The Economist* newspaper represented austerity amid the European austerity drive in 2010–2012. The starting point for article IV is that the economic predicament has accelerated the scholarship on journalism, austerity and neoliberalism. The scholarship, however, lacks a nuanced analysis on how elite economic journalism has portrayed austerity during the crisis and contributed to the legitimization of the neoliberal discourse. Moreover, the study argues that the scholarship has largely neglected the differences between different neoliberal discourses when analysing mediated representations of austerity. The study makes use of the distinction between a "transparent" neoliberal discourse (constituted via an antagonistic relationship between the market and the state) and a "euphemized" neoliberal discourse, which adopts a "post-political" style

wherein the adversarial nature of politics should make room for a pragmatic and rational consensus. The study argues that the distinction is useful for journalism scholars interested in the interplay between neoliberalism and the media. Often, quality journalism and elite economic journalism steer clear of the more transparent representation of neoliberal policy ideas. Scholars therefore need nuanced definitions of neoliberalism to see how neoliberalism plays out in different media.

7 DATA USED IN THE THESIS

This thesis is founded upon different sets of empirical material. However, the data are comprised solely of journalistic articles that have been published in mainstream European newspapers. Other forms of journalistic media – such as television and radio – have not been considered in the thesis.

Article I is built upon a vast amount of material gathered in a large-scale comparative research project that examined how the euro crisis was portrayed by European news media in 2010–2012 (see Pickard 2015). In the project, researchers analysed over 10 000 articles from 40 newspapers from 10 European countries – Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the UK. From each country, four newspapers were chosen: the leading business/financial paper, the leading conservative and liberal papers and the leading tabloid. These papers were searched for articles that dealt with the euro crisis. Content analysis was used to identify and code, among various other elements, the main themes addressed in the euro crisis and the main news sources used by journalists.

Importantly for article I, the problem definitions (PDs, "what caused the crisis?") and preferred treatment recommendations (TRs, "what should be done?") were analysed and coded from each article.[5] To analyse the public legitimation of austerity and the German ordoliberal narrative about the euro crisis, we used data from this research to map out the most salient problem definitions of the crisis in eurozone area newspapers. (As non-eurozone members, UK and Poland were left out the analysis.) Moreover, we analysed the most frequent treatment recommendations mentioned in the eurozone press. For the analysis, we identified PDs and TRs that corresponded with an "ordoliberal" (Bonefeld 2012) reading of the crisis. In our analysis, an ordoliberal reading of the crisis accounts for an interpretation that sees the crisis stemming from excessive amounts of public debt and the lack of competitiveness of the eurozone crisis countries. Accordingly, the crisis should be dealt with competitiveness-enhancing structural reforms and fiscal austerity. Moreover, we identified PDs and TRs that were in line with a "Keynesian" reading of the crisis. In a Keynesian reading, the flawed structure of the eurozone as well as the crisis in the global economy were emphasized as the root causes of the crisis. In our analysis, a Keynesian policy approach would be to emphasize the importance of fiscal and monetary stimulus and debt haircuts or even contemplate the breakup of the eurozone.

Article II uses articles from the leading Finnish national daily newspaper *HS* to analyse the public interplay between economic ideas and the dominant institutions of economic policymaking between 2009 and 2014. We collected

[5] For a more detailed description of the methods and coding used in the research project, see Appendixes 1, 2 and 3 in Pickard 2015b.

articles around two yearly events concerning the preparation and drafting of the Finnish budget. By focusing on these moments around the drafting of the annual budget, we were able to pinpoint the moments during which representatives of various institutions commented on economic problems and preferred problem solutions. The search periods around the yearly events were confined to two-week periods. The electronic archive of *HS* was searched using various keywords on economic policy and the budget. The total number of articles was 119.

In article II, we argue that *HS* plays a fundamental role in the Finnish public sphere and in the debates on economic policy. Not only is *HS* the largest daily subscription newspaper in Finland and in the Nordic countries (Nordicom 2014), it also belongs to the rather confined circle of Finnish elite media, nurturing a consensual political culture in which political and economic elites coalesce around ideas that are thought of as serving the national interest (Lounasmeri 2017).

Articles III and IV utilize articles gathered from the influential weekly business magazine *The Economist*. Two factors make *The Economist* an interesting object of research. First, *The Economist* – established in Britain in 1843 to work as the vanguard of liberalism and free-market ideas – is a prime example of elite journalism whose readers consist of global decision-makers (Edwards 1995, 2–3; Starr 2004; Davis 2017). Such journalistic outlets as *The Economist* or the *Financial Times* work as inter-elite public spheres where the global elite can deliberate on issues of global importance. And despite its clear status as an elite publication, *The Economist* embodies many of the values central to professional journalism (see Parsons 1989, 26; Hartley 2010). Therefore, it is interesting to analyse how *The Economist* has historically portrayed austerity, as it tells us about the interplay between professional journalism and economic ideas.

I used *The Economist* historical archive to look for *The Economist* articles that included the word "austerity". I started by examining how often the word occurred between 1843 and 2013. The term first occurred in 1843 but was rarely used before the Second World War. For article III, I identified historical periods during which the use of the word austerity peaked. The first peak of the use of word "austerity" occurred after the Second World War, and it started to gain visibility again in the 1970s and 1980s. However, after that the term started to lose momentum until the global financial crisis made austerity a global buzzword. In article III, I analyse the historical similarities and differences in *The Economist*'s austerity coverage between the three peak periods. Article IV utilizes the same articles but concentrates on analysing the final austerity peak, the intensive debate on austerity during the euro crisis.

8 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis uses a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to assess the journalistic austerity debate. The next section will address the questions of theory and methodology, and how the different approaches help to address the question on journalism's democratic functions amid the austerity debate.

8.1 THE LEGITIMATION OF AUSTERITY IN THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

The starting point for article I is that the euro crisis is a significant moment in the evolution of a European public sphere. Traditionally, the debate about the need for a European public sphere has been motivated by the notion that European integration has been an elite-driven project and lacked popular legitimacy (e.g. Koopmans and Statham 2010). What Europe needs is, therefore, a European public sphere where Europeans could rationally deliberate on issues of common concern and provide the European project with popular legitimacy (Habermas 2001). However, scholars have argued that due to the considerable variety of languages and political cultures in Europe, the idea of a common European public sphere is inconceivable (Lingenberg 2009, 46–47; Trenz 2008, 56). News agendas are largely dominated by national issues, and people construct their political identities by following national policy debates. By contrast, the EU has been characterized by a lack of democratic elements – a government–opposition setting, for example – that would spark popular interest on European politics (Mair 2013).

The euro crisis, however, was a potential turning point (Herkman and Harjuniemi 2015). Suddenly, the European news agenda was dominated by a common European issue, the economic crisis. Journalism was geared towards addressing an issue of common European interest and played close attention to policy developments and debates in various European countries. The crisis was a moment that could give birth to a critical and reasoned European debate that would spark popular interests towards European integration, a project thus far characterized by technocratic tendencies.

At the same time, however, the crisis proved to be an opportunity for European elites to legitimize austerity measures in the eyes of the European public. In particular, it was an opportunity for Germany and its chancellor Angela Merkel – the most prominent leader in public debate on the euro crisis (Hubé et al. 2015) – to provide the European public with a German interpretation of the crisis, an interpretation according to which Europe needs austerity and structural reforms to remain competitive in a globalized world

economy. Thus, we deploy a quantitative frame analysis to examine the salience of the German ordoliberal framing of the crisis in European newspapers. We focus on the German tradition of ordoliberalism[6] as a strategic tool for the legitimization of policy decisions.

Journalism and media scholars often refer to the concept framing when analysing the salience given to different policy ideas and rationalizations by the media (Entman 2007; Maeseele 2010; Reese 2010). In short, framing is a process in which certain aspects of social reality are made more salient than others. Frames work by pinpointing a problem and offering a recommendation on how the treat the problem at hand (Entman 1993). Accordingly, in article I we analyse the most salient problem definitions and treatment recommendations given by European press to analyse whether the German ordoliberal frame dominated the European press coverage of the crisis.

8.2 THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POLICY IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS IN JOURNALISM

The starting point for article II was the realization that the financial crisis and the euro crisis did not lead to any major re-interpretation of dominant economic policy ideas. On the contrary, the post-financial crisis conjuncture has witnessed the staying power of neoliberal ideas and strengthening of such non-majoritarian institutions as the ECB enforcing them. This has gone against the notion that economic crises have historically fostered institutional change and advanced the emergence of new policy paradigms. This was the case when post-war Keynesian welfare state policies became the target of a neoliberal charge during the 1970s and 1980s (Hall 1993; Blyth 2001).

In article II, we examine the public dynamics between economic policy ideas and economic policy institutions. We examine why no ideational shift

[6] Ordoliberalism is a strand of liberalism for which economists and lawyers at the University of Freiburg laid foundations in the 1930s. Disillusioned by the crisis of laissez-faire liberalism of the 19th century and, on the other hand, aghast by the rise of fascism, socialism and economic thought that envisaged a role for the state an active economic planner, ordoliberals sought to provide new foundations for liberalism (Foucault 2008). In ordoliberal thought, a strong state is needed to create and uphold a rule-based framework for a competitive market economy. The strong state uses its legislative and regulative power to combat, for example, cartels and monopolies and other excessive concentrations of economic power. At the same time, however, the state should refrain from active economic management or planning. Independent central banks and rule-based fiscal policy are a part of the ordoliberal economic playbook. The favored German policies amid the eurozone crisis have at least partly been attributed to the ongoing attachment to the ordoliberal tradition (e.g. Dullien and Guérot 2012; Berghahn and Young 2013; Biebricher 2013). Importantly, economic ideas underpinning ordoliberalism are a central part of the German political culture (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013). Ordoliberalism has a central part in the popular German narrative about the founding of the prosperous and stable "social market economy" after the Second World War (Bonefeld 2012).

occurred after the global financial crisis, using the economic policy debates in Finland between 2009 and 2014 as a case study. Theoretically, article II draws from ideological institutionalism, which is interested in the importance of ideas in policy change (Hay 2001; Koning 2016). Ideational institutionalists argue that policy changes do not simply reflect structural power or institutional factors. Ideational institutionalists argue that ideas also matter. It is especially during times of economic distress – when dominant ideas are fragile – when "the politics of ideas becomes increasingly important" (Blyth 2001, 3–4). Indeed, ideational institutionalists are interested in how different actors (elites to a large extent, but also other less powerful groups) use ideas to challenge the prevailing order.

In article II, we argue that journalism studies go well with the ideational institutionalist research strand. The role of the media is essential in the ideational struggles between various agents and institutions (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016, 325–327). The journalistic representations of economic crises might either lead to the contestation of dominant ideas and institutions or further strengthen established policy ideas and the legitimacy of dominant institutions.

With a qualitative textual analysis (Fürsich 2009, 241) we analyse 119 articles and identify the most prominent sources and agents of the Finnish economic policy debate between 2009 and 2014. The textual analysis concentrates on identifying the dominant "programmatic" (Baker and Underhill 2015, 1) economic ideas concerning the state of the Finnish economy and the proposed solutions. This method gives us ample space to interpret these dominant ideas within the institutional and historical context of Finnish economic policymaking.

8.3 THE HISTORICAL FRAMING OF AUSTERITY

Article III addresses the historical relationship between journalism and austerity. A growing body of research has payed attention to journalism and austerity amid the financial crisis and the euro crisis, but the scholarship has lacked a historical perspective. With a qualitative frame analysis approach, article III examines how *The Economist* has addressed austerity during periods of economic turmoil between 1947 and 2012. The study pinpoints three distinctive periods of austerity: austerity in post-World War II Britain, austerity in Francois Mitterrand's France in the early 1980s, and austerity during the euro crisis in 2010–2012. The study identifies that during these periods, *The Economist*'s use of the word austerity peaked. Here, a qualitative approach to framing was chosen to analyse *The Economist*'s austerity coverage. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to more fully emphasize the political context of journalism (Hardin and Whiteside 2010; Linström and Marais 2012).

The goal of the study is to examine the historical relationship between professional journalism and economic ideas. Especially since the Second World War, journalists have believed in the Enlightenment values of reason and progress (Kantola 2016, 424–427). It was during the 20th century when journalism developed a semi-scientific identity (Schudson 1978; Tuchman 1978) and started to believe in the ideals of objectivity and neutrality. The aim of the article is to dissect the relationship between these professional ideals and the journalistic coverage of influential economic ideas. Article III illustrates the staying power of journalistic frames and shows how the journalistic framing of austerity has remained remarkably intact since the 1940s. Moreover, article III aims to further problematize the "post-ideological" nature of political journalism and witness to the inherently political nature of journalistic framing.

8.4 THE DEPOLITICIZATION OF AUSTERITY BY ECONOMIC JOURNALISM: A DISCOURSE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Article IV utilizes discourse theory to analyse the nexus between journalism, austerity and neoliberalism. The starting point of the study is that the financial crisis and the euro crisis have accelerated the scholarship on journalism, austerity and neoliberalism. Various scholars have argued that journalism addressed the economic crisis as a public sector debt crisis and worked to naturalize the neoliberal policy prescription of austerity and structural reforms (Tracy 2012; Preston and Silke 2014; Doudaki et al. 2019).

The study, however, argues that the scholarship has thus far neglected the differences between different types of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is, indeed, a concept that is hard to grasp (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009). It is often discussed in the context of the paradigm shift that took place in the global economy in the 1970s and 1980s as labour unions and expansive welfare states were discredited as an economic burden in a globalizing world. For such neoliberals as Margaret Thatcher, neoliberalism was an antagonistic rupture from the post-war social democratic consensus (Phelan 2007).

However, scholars have also discussed neoliberalism in the context of the thesis on "post-politics" or "end of ideology" (Mouffe 2005: Zizek 2008). According to this thesis, it has been impossible to envisage a realist option for liberal capitalism since the fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union. In the age of post-politics, neoliberalism is not characterized by an agonistic relationship between politico-ideological projects but by a consensus on the broad lines of the global economy. Neoliberalism is an attempt to eliminate the antagonistic nature of politics in the name of pragmatism (Phelan 2007). This non-ideological ideology was crystallized by the centre-left governments of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton in the UK and US in the 1990s.

Thus, article IV calls for differentiating between different neoliberalism. Following Phelan (2007), the study distinguishes between a "transparent" neoliberal discourse – constructed via an antagonistic relationship between the inefficient state and the virtuous private sector – and a "euphemized" neoliberal discourse that eschews ideological antagonisms and adopts a post-political posture. Article IV argues that this is a useful distinction for journalism scholars. Professional journalism takes political detachment and objectivity seriously (Phelan and Dawes 2018) and often sees itself as a non-ideological mediator of realism (Phelan 2014, 84–85). Thus, scholars interested in how neoliberal discourses play out in journalism need nuanced definitions of neoliberalism.

To illustrate these dynamics, I examined how *The Economist* covered European austerity between 2010 and 2012. I analysed 100 articles in *The Economist* using discourse theory concepts as a methodological toolkit to examine how the magazine constructed a euphemized neoliberal discourse during the debate on European austerity. Drawing from both Marxist theory and post-structuralism, discourse theory stresses the contingent nature of identity and reality (Laclau and Mouffe 2014; Laclau 1990). Discourse theory stresses that dominant political formations are not a result of immanent material or economic laws, but they derive from hegemonic discursive articulations (Carpentier et al. 2019) Discourses are constructed via the linking of various elements or signifiers to constitute a chain of equivalence (Laclau 1996), and the articulation is given coherence by naming an outside agent (Phelan 2009, 220). The transparent neoliberal discourse, for example, is articulated via the linking of "free markets", "entrepreneurship" and "innovation" and by constructing an antagonistic relationship with the socialist or social democratic other (Phelan and Dahlberg 2011). The "euphemistic" neoliberal discourse, on the contrary, disavows such political antagonisms, as the chain of equivalence is constructed through equating such signifiers as "consensus", "progression", "pragmatism" and the "common good". Antagonisms and conflicts persist, of course, but they are depoliticized. They become confrontations between the reasonable modernizers and the unimaginative, unchanging traditionalists (Phelan 2007, 35).

9 FINDINGS

The following section will briefly present the findings of articles I–IV.

9.1 LIMITED ALTERNATIVES TO DOMINANT NARRATIVES IN THE EUROPEAN AUSTERITY DEBATE

The articles find limited amounts of ideological alternatives within the journalistic debate on austerity. Article I shows how the German "ordoliberal" frame was the dominant frame in European news media in 2010–2012. Article I argues that the German government, arguably the dominant force when it comes to European economic policymaking, was able to use the European news media as a tool to legitimize austerity as the necessary way to deal with the crisis.

Article I shows the ordoliberal framing of the euro crisis enjoying widespread salience across the eight studied eurozone countries. According to the ordoliberal framing, the root problem of the crisis lay with excessive public indebtedness and the lack of competitiveness of the crisis countries. The concern over public finances dominated the debate over the roots of the crisis particularly in Finland, Germany, Belgium, Germany and Greece. Accordingly, the European news media downplayed the alternative, "Keynesian" reading of the crisis that emphasized the EMU (The Economic and Monetary Union) structure or the global economic turmoil as the root causes of the crisis.

However, although the dominant narrative circulated by European journalism certainly was the "ordoliberal" one, the picture is a bit more nuanced. Indeed, article I shows that there were, to some extent, national differences in the coverage of the euro crisis. In France, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands, newspapers were more inclined to address the problematic structure of the eurozone as the root of the crisis.

The same can be said about the treatment recommendations. Overall, the dominant nature of the ordoliberal frame meant that the European press presented austerity and structural reforms as the main tools to combat the euro crisis. Again, however, there is a degree of national variation. In France, for example, the idea that steps towards a fiscal union should be taken in Europe to repair the dysfunctional structure of the EMU was prominent. In the German press, this idea was downplayed.

Although the findings corroborate the notion that the European news media largely echoed the elite consensus on the necessity of austerity policies, it also paints a more nuanced picture. Article I finds not only similarities but also differences within the European press when it comes to covering the European economic crisis. The reasons for these differences are beyond this

study, but it is reasonable to assume that they stem from national differences in economic policy traditions (Brunnermeir et al. 2016) as well as differences in journalistic cultures (Hallin and Mancini 2004). The findings do suggest that German government was able to use the European news media as a tool to legitimize the need for austerity in the eyes of the European public, but national newspapers coverage was still shaped by national characteristics. In Spain, for example, journalism paid considerable attention to the larger failures of national political culture as a root of the crisis. Considering the political developments in Spain – for example, the challenge presented to established parties by the populist left-wing *Podemos,* which has attacked the corrupted nature of established political forces (Kyriadikou and Garcia-Blanco 2018) – this seems understandable.

9.2 ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS DOMINATED THE DEBATE ON AUSTERITY

Article II elaborates more on how powerful national and transnational institutions and traditions of economic policymaking influence the journalistic debate on austerity. By looking at the Finnish debate on economic policy between 2009 and 2014, article II shows how journalists coalesced around a consensus built by the dominant institutions of economic policymaking, namely the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the EU.

Article II finds evidence for the notion that even during times of economic crises – which might potentially lead to the emergence of new economic policy paradigms – the debate on economic policy reflects the elite consensus. In Finland, the MoF has traditionally acted as the bureaucratic stronghold of Finnish economic policymaking, promoting ideas that highlight the importance of balanced budgets and national competitiveness (Pekkarinen and Heinonen 1998). The economic crisis of 1990s strengthened the position of the Mof as it developed into a policy entrepreneur for multi-party coalition government and devised the idea of long-term budgetary allocations, making it easier for curb public spending (Heikkinen and Tiihonen 2010; Kantola and Kananen 2013). Moreover, as a member of the EU and the eurozone, Finland has relinquished parts of its economic sovereignty to non-majoritarian European institutions, such as the ECB and European commission, leading to a strengthening of technocratic tendencies of Finnish economic policymaking.

These developments have accelerated the depoliticization of economic policymaking. The strong institutional position of the Mof and EU work to shield demands of fiscal austerity and reforms from popular challenges. As Finnish parties and political elites from both the left and the right have traditionally been keen to subscribe to the MoF line (Kantola and Kananen 2013), there is very little room for deviations from the orthodoxy.

This is reflected by the results from article II, arguing that the public debate on Finnish economic policymaking follows the MoF/EU line. The study

illustrates this by identifying the main actors in the journalistic debate on austerity as well as the economic policy ideas voiced by the actors. The debate was dominated by such elite sources as government ministers, economists, government/opposition party politicians and officials.

The economic policy ideas and views about the state of the Finnish economy largely reiterated the MoF/EU interpretation of the crisis. After a brief period of active fiscal stimulus to tame the effects of the global financial crisis, the fiscal policy stance turned towards austerity in 2010. In Finland, the MoF started to voice its concerns on excessive public deficits and prepare the public for belt-tightening. Instead of additional doses of debt-financed fiscal stimulus, Finland would have to start curbing its public expenditure and restoring competitiveness via supply-side structural reforms. In the pages of *HS*, calls for stimulus began to make room for a consensus on austerity and structural reforms. Leading politicians from both the social democratic party and the centre-right subscribed to the idea of necessary austerity. Few alternatives to austerity could be imagined, although after a recovery in economic output in 2010, the economic situation started to look increasingly dire towards the end of 2011.

The results from article II are in line with the well-established notion that the limits of journalistic debate are dependent on the prevailing elite consensus or dissensus (Hallin 1984; Lounasmeri 2017). To be sure, *HS* gave room to dissidents and, for example, to economists who were critical of austerity, arguing that it will deepen the economic downturn. Overall, the debate was characterized by a one-sided view of the economic situation.

9.3 AUSTERITY AS MODERNIZATION AND REASON

Articles III and IV elaborate more on the relationship between journalism and austerity. Study IV examines how *The Economist* newspaper addressed austerity during the peak of the euro crisis between 2010 and 2012. With a discourse theory approach, it identifies three rhetorical strategies through which *The Economist* addressed the question of austerity amid the crisis: *rational and moral austerity, anti-politics* and *austerity as modernization*.

Within the rhetorical strategy of *rational and moral austerity*, *The Economist* saw austerity as the necessary tool to combat the excessive deficits and levels of public debt in European countries. For *The Economist*, the dire state of public finances left no alternative to cutting public spending. However, *The Economist* also cultivated a critical debate on the timing and scaling of European austerity policies. The magazine was especially critical of Germany and its chancellor Angela Merkel. Germany and Merkel were criticized of adopting a fundamentalist hard-line stance on austerity and derailing any prospects of economic recovery in Europe. *The Economist* argued that instead of burdening crisis-hit European countries with ever-increasing austerity,

European economic policy should focus on competitiveness-enhancing structural reforms and a more balanced austerity position.

The rhetorical strategy of *anti-politics* saw *The Economist* criticizing European decision-makers for their inability to commit to necessary austerity measures. According to this rhetorical strategy, politicians were often driven by populist impulses or electoral pressure that made it difficult for politicians to do what is necessary. Instead of addressing the problem of public debt or the structural dysfunctionalities of European welfare states, politicians were pandering to populist reflexes or blaming such unpopular groups as bankers for creating the crisis.

The rhetorical strategy of *austerity as modernization* saw austerity and structural reforms as necessary to modernize the European welfare states to meet the conditions of a competitive global economy. *The Economist,* on many occasions, argued that the current structures of European welfare states were serving vested interests or insiders, the ones protected by strong labour unions or excessive regulation and bureaucratic red tape. These old structures should be modernized and reformed to serve the common good and the outsiders of the labour market, the migrant workers, and young people in precarious situations.

Article III – which examines how *The Economist* has historically addressed the question of austerity – found similar results. Historically, *The Economist* has seen austerity as a necessary if yet a difficult solution to problems caused either by economic shocks or illiterate economic policy ideas. In post-World War II Britain, austerity, in the form of rationing private consumption, was needed to balance the British trade deficit. Although *The Economist* acknowledged the dire reality of Britons living under daily austerity, the economic conditions left no alternative to economic hardships. Moreover, austerity was needed to modernize the state-led economy of France in the 1980s, ridden with sky-rocketing inflation and public deficits. *The Economist* represented austerity as way of bringing economic realism into a society vexed by an attachment to Keynesian economic policies.

Indeed, article III reported that historically, journalism has had the tendency to juxtapose the apolitical economic logic of austerity with the often-irrational nature of politics. The article argues that this has had to do with the professional values of journalism that have become central to the profession in the course of the 20th century. As the profession has sought to become the professional manager of the public sphere, it has placed itself above political passions and ideological confrontations. Journalism has developed a "realist style" (Phelan 2014, 87) when covering issues of economic policymaking. Thus, such economic policy ideas as austerity are often represented as simply the common-sense thing to do. Politicians or other actors that oppose austerity are, on the other hand, represented as watching over their own narrow sectional interests instead of doing what is necessary to help the common good.

10 CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the beginning of this synopsis chapter, the global financial crisis, the euro crisis and the austerity measures that followed marked a key moment for liberal democracies. Unpopular bank bailouts and austerity measures have challenged established political forces and nurtured populist politics. The populist surge has challenged such institutions as the EU that have furthered economic and political integration and steered global governance after the Second World War.

This crisis of liberal politics intertwines closely with the current ills of journalism and democratic public communications. These predicaments manifest themselves in myriad concerns on the future of public communication. Some media scholars see such phenomena as fake news and post-truth as signs of a deteriorating public sphere where deliberation is no longer possible and expertise and factual evidence have lost their value (Dahlgren 2018). Due to digital communications, the public sphere is said to be splintering into partisan silos where neither consensus-building nor common problem-solving is possible. Democratic deliberation is making room for an overtly emotional public life in which identity politics overrides respect for facts. At the same time, authoritarian politicians and demagogues attack journalists as the enemies of the people. However, critics have noted how the panic concerning "fake news" and "post-truth" also works to externalize the crisis of liberal politics to external corruptive forces resorting to devious social media tactics to dupe the irrational masses (Collins 2019: Jutel 2019: Kreiss 2018). However, the intense debate on the conditions of democratic debate signals that the very model of 20th century liberal public communication based on such ideals as reasonable deliberation is being challenged (Waisbord 2018).

This model of public communication has dominated Western democracies during the latter half of the 20th century, and journalism has played a key part in this system (Blumler and Coleman 2015). Within this model, the often-contradictory needs of democracy and the market could be mitigated. The profitable journalistic business model, supported by a lack of popular technological alternatives, could pay for resource-consuming critical journalism deemed essential for a functioning democracy (Curran 2007). Newsrooms could remain independent from marketing departments and partisan pressure. Furthermore, journalists could cope with the self-evident dilemma of being a part of the professional classes while remaining independent public watchdogs at the same time (Hallin 1992). Due to social democratic economic and social policies that aimed to redistribute wealth and mitigate conflicting material interests, it was easier to envisage a public that ultimately shared a similar vision of a common good.

The cornerstones of the professional model have been in decline. Since the 1980s, advances in mass media technologies have challenged the old media

model of information scarcity (Christians et al. 2009, 15). The internet and other advances in media technologies have made it possible for different forms of online counter-knowledge to circumvent journalistic moderation and the rules of a regulated public debate. This has, no doubt, been good news for critical alternative journalism. However, a fierce battle for engaged viewers, readers and listeners means that it is getting more difficult to sustain journalistic autonomy and objectivity from economic and political pressure (Hallin 2006). Indeed, the rise of Trump shows how such outlets as *Fox News* have discovered how lucrative it is to reach out to a culturally anxious white identity (Kreiss 2018). Of course, some new forms of journalism, such as news satire, have succeeded in bridging the gap between critical journalistic truth-telling and entertainment (Baym 2009).

The wider context for the crisis of liberal-democratic political communication is the rise of neoliberalism since the 1970s and the crisis of the Keynesian politico-economic project. Embodied by such politicians as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, neoliberal[7] politics challenged the cornerstones of the post-World War II consensus, built on such ideas as active state-led economic management and full employment. Neoliberals argued that the expansive welfare state would have to make room for a leaner state geared towards international competitiveness, deregulation and fiscal austerity.

This affected media and journalism as well. The neoliberal decades have witnessed market-based solutions dominating media policy. The reduction of public monopolies has led the way when it comes to managing the media landscape. This has meant an end to the nationally regulated media model (Christians et al. 2009, 15). The well-established analysis is that journalistic autonomy and public interest have been undermined by increasing marketization and commodification of news, replacing critical content and commentary with infotainment and public spectacles (see Phelan 2014, 89). Policy approaches that have favoured deregulation and privatization in broadcasting and telecommunications have increased corporate ownership of the media. The democratic functions of journalism and media have been subordinated to an all-powerful market rationale (Hardy 2014, 58–64). Furthermore, Western societies have experienced rising levels of economic polarization (Piketty 2017; Nachtwey 2018). It has been argued that this has fuelled the public mistrust towards such traditional truth-tellers as experts and journalists (Davies 2018; Waisbord 2018). Therefore, it is increasingly difficult for journalism to reach a consensual mass public that would share a similar vision of the good society.

The goal of this study was to address the nexus of journalism and democratic public communications through the lens provided by the economic

[7] Neoliberalism is a multi-faceted concept, and a comprehensive assessment of neoliberalism is beyond the scope of this work (for detailed analysis on neoliberalism, see Harvey 2005; Foucault 2008; Boas and Gans-Morse 2009; Mirowski 2013; Davies 2014; Slobodian 2018).

crisis and austerity. I argue that the difficulties of journalism and democratic public communication should be addressed simultaneously with the "populist moment" (Waisbord 2018b) of Western politics, a development accelerated by the crisis and policies of austerity. I have argued that while the crisis disrupted the status quo of Western politics, it also opened a space for the public articulation of alternative policy ideas. Thus far, political forces from both the right and the left have made use of this opportunity. Whether they are anti-immigrant right-wing ideas or calls for democratic socialism, new ideas are being laid out. Therefore, the crisis and austerity measures provide scholars with an intriguing opportunity to address the relationship between democracy and journalism. The aim of this thesis is to consider whether this could be useful in figuring out how journalism might be better equipped to handle the inflammatory and highly conflictual 21st century public life.

No doubt, the scholarship has already provided important insights and underlined how "runaway media commercialization" (Waisbord 2018b, 6) and the decline of nationally regulated media infrastructures have nurtured post-truth public communications. Journalists are encouraged to engage in critical journalism, defend press freedom and take a firm stance against such anti-democratic demagogues as Donald Trump (Benson 2018; Karpf 2018). The interest towards data journalism (Anderson 2018) is another attempt to restore journalism's authoritative position as a curator of facts and critical analysis.

However, the contribution this article-based thesis makes to this debate is the following: To envisage a positive vision for democratic journalism, we need to analyse the contradictory nature of the journalism-democracy nexus. I have examined these dynamics between journalism and democracy via four articles that analyse how professional journalism covered the policies of austerity that started to dominate European politics in 2010, briefly after the global financial crisis. Starting from the normative assumption that journalism has certain democratic duties, I was interested in examining the extent to which journalism offered differing interpretations about the crisis. Did it challenge the dominant view about necessary austerity? To what extent did European professional journalism succeed in fostering a pluralist debate on economic policy – a debate that would have included different politico-ideological views and solutions?

According to this study, one must be rather critical. Journalism, no doubt, provided people with accurate information about the unfolding of the crisis. To be sure, critical analyses were written as well (see articles II, III and IV). However, the journalistic debate amid the euro crisis was dominated by a narrow view on austerity. The big picture is that journalism presented austerity as the necessary cure to the woes of European economies. Public spending cuts were needed to reduce public debt, restore competitiveness and signal the financial market that Europe was serious about getting its fiscal house in order.

The German tradition of ordoliberalism (Bonefeld 2012) was the dominant way of making sense of the euro crisis across the European public sphere (article I). The German government was able to use the European news media to circulate its interpretation of the crisis, according to which the roots of the predicament lie in excessive public indebtedness and in the uncompetitive nature of crisis-hit economies. Thus, austerity was needed to curb public debt and to regain competitiveness and market trust. An alternative reading of the crisis – dubbed as a "Keynesian" interpretation that would have emphasized the problematic structure of the eurozone and demanded a more active fiscal stance as a response to the crisis – was largely downplayed by European newspapers.

What are the factors behind the one-sided nature of the debate? They are, no doubt, manifold and often repeated by journalism scholarship. First, it is obvious that journalism is dependent on the sources that provide journalists with the material from which news and analyses are constructed (article II). It is one of journalism's functions to report on what the political decision-makers and other powerful groups think about issues of public importance. Therefore, it is somewhat natural that the views of those powerful groups dominate journalism and its accounts of economic policymaking. Indeed, "sources make the news" (Sigal 1986).

Journalism scholarship has established that since the 1970s, financial and corporate interests have come to dominate economic news, reflecting the structural shifts (e.g. the decline of national industries) in the political economy and the growing importance of the financial sector's power (Davis 2018). Certain economic perspectives such as labour issues have been downplayed, while economic news has circulated narratives about the importance of deregulation, fiscal discipline and free trade (Mårtenson 2000; Durham 2007; Davis 2012). Scholars and journalists themselves have argued that financial journalists' dependence on financial public relations, the difficulties of performing investigative journalism amid budget cuts and common-sense attitudes towards free-market ideas have contributed to the lack of critical journalism on the banking sector and the financialised global economy (Doyle 2006; Manning 2013). Berry's (2019) comprehensive analysis on how the British broadcast and print media covered austerity and the global financial crisis brings to the fore the complex structure that affects the production of economic news. This nexus of factors includes, for example, varying ideological commitments, standardised sourcing practices, advertising incentives and the formation of an elite consensus that effectively sets limits on debate.

The well-established dependency on elite sources creates a somewhat paradoxical situation for journalism. The very premise of professional journalism lies upon independence and autonomy from political and economic power. The history of professional journalism has seen journalists gaining autonomy from politics and economic power. As independent journalism has detached itself from partisan positions and inhabited a place

as the critical observer of politics, it has, however, become dependent on politicians, officials and various experts. Thus, journalistic representations often end up resembling the ideas voiced by these elites.

Other factors need to be considered as well. Media scholars have long lamented how the political economy of the media has narrowed down the space for critical journalism. As publishers are trying to deal with declining advertising and subscription revenues, newsroom resources are being slashed. Obviously, this has made it more demanding for journalists to engage in challenging and time-consuming endeavours. Moreover, it is important to recall that journalism is a professional practice guided by organizational routines. Journalists need to stick with the professional practices that make the production of news and commentary possible. Journalism is, after all, an industry with practices that ensure a steady flow of the journalistic product (Tuchman 1978). So, while journalism scholars demand that professional journalists foster critical deliberation, ideological pluralism and civic engagement, they often neglect the daily constrains with which journalists need to operate (see Nielsen 2017).

Moreover, central values of journalism carry certain tendencies that are problematic in terms of pluralist democratic debate. Critics have argued that professional journalism's worldview is embedded in a "post-ideological" (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2017, 652–653) understanding of the social world. In professional journalism, expertise often overrides political conflicts and ideologies, and ideas that are deemed too far-out or radical are not deemed as legitimate political positions but are dismissed as extremist. In the case of austerity, it seems that for journalism, austerity has historically been a common-sense idea, a necessity demanded by the market logics or the workings of the economy. Articles III and IV show how journalism often addresses austerity as an economic necessity hollowed out of ideological or political implications. In journalism, economic reason or market logics are therefore juxtaposed against the selfish or irrational nature of politics and democratic procedures. The aim of journalism is often to shield the public from politicians whose economic policy initiatives are driven by vested interests or populism. Studies III and IV argue that this tendency is supported by journalism's historical claim to political neutrality, objectivity and public service.

11 DISCUSSION

How to think of ways forward and develop democratic journalism? Mere criticism is clearly not enough. Critical scholarship has historically – and very much in line with this thesis – done a thorough job in showcasing how Western journalism, despite grandiose claims of democratic importance, often stifles democratic struggles and works to reproduce hegemonic views about the necessity of, for example, neoliberal politics. This thesis is no exception from this line of thought.

The problem is that this does not feel very fruitful in the current impasse. It is important to critically dissect the working of professional journalism, but these critical accounts might often lead to sheer destructive cynicism that abandons professional journalism as inherently anti-democratic (Muhlmann 2010). Critical accounts of journalism are often overtly deterministic and fail to give enough agency to professional journalism. The argument goes that as a commercial practise geared to profit-maximization, mainstream journalism is doomed to reproduce and disseminate elite ideas and neglect democratic concerns (see Phelan 2014, 88–90).

Could theories on democracy and journalism help us rethink a way forward for journalism? Liberal and deliberative theories stress the importance of communicative freedoms, pluralism and deliberation. What is needed is a greater plurality of voices, leading to a more enlightened public sphere that better represents the will of the reasoned public. However, critical scholarship has shown that mere calls for pluralism are not enough if journalism offers a sanitised version of pluralism (Karppinen 2018). These calls become merely ideas that, despite their alleged pluralism, do not challenge the hegemonic assumptions underlying societies and their power structures (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015; Fenton 2016). Moreover, liberal thought on the emancipatory, democratic potential of digital communication technologies and social media often overlooks that these tools are designed to maximise individual engagement with media content and to turn this engagement into unpaid digital labour and valuable data (Dean 2018; Couldry and Mejias 2019; Seymour 2019). Jodi Dean (2018) argues that digital media technologies, often heralded as technologies of liberation and democracy, should be treated as networks of 'communicative capitalism' that turn democratic and political passions into forms of individualistic media consumption and content production, thus using resources that could be employed for political organising.

Natalie Fenton and Gavan Titley (2015) point out that calls for pluralism and communicative freedom tend to lead to media-centric analyses dismissive of the post-democratic tendencies of Western societies during the neoliberal era. The acceleration of neoliberal governance and the depoliticization of politics have made societies elite driven and unresponsive toward popular

democratic needs (Crouch 2004; Mouffe 2005; Mair 2013). Scholars have argued that political decision-making often takes place in isolation, circumventing journalistic watchdogs and public opinion (Philo et al. 2015). In short, the problem is that no amount of deliberation or plurality of voices is enough to affect the way in which the world is governed. The technocratic nature of Western politics was made blatantly clear during the euro crisis when non-majoritarian organisations such as the IMF, ECB and European Commission had essential roles in enforcing austerity policies. Thus, calls for liberal democratic values such as freedom of expression and plurality need to be coupled with analyses of the workings of the political economy (Fenton and Titley 2015).

However, as William Davies (2018) argues, the Brexit vote and the Trump presidency have repoliticized the global economy and dethroned the technocratic class of central bankers and economists. The populist moment means that questions on the architecture of the global economy are no longer resolved solely by free-trade deals and experts detached from the political realm but also by popular passions. Various developments in the global economy have accelerated the politicization of economic issues. For example, the prolonged post-crisis period of low interest rates and feeble inflation has affected the debate on the relationship between monetary and fiscal policy. Thus, Mario Draghi, head of the ECB, has called for European governments to engage in fiscal spending to boost inflation.[8] This indeed is a far cry from the heyday of the austerity fad.

As reporting tends to follow the boundaries set by key political and economic elites (see Hallin 1984; Lounasmeri 2017), the mutations and fractures in elite opinion undoubtedly will also impact journalism and economic news. For instance, questions concerning European monetary and fiscal policy will become public controversies and fodder for inter-elite disputes. Indeed, *The Financial Times*' call in 2019 for a 'reset' of capitalism[9] can be read as a sign of elite concern. Something needs to be done about global inequality to ensure the legitimacy of free-market ideas in the eyes of the austerity-ridden masses. The debate on economic policy is further fuelled by acute concerns about climate change. What kinds of economic policies should be enacted to mitigate the effects of climate change and fund the investments needed for a just transformation of the economy?

In a new setting, a more agonistic approach towards journalism and democracy could be fruitful. The agonistic approach owes to political philosopher Chantal Mouffe who argues that the turmoil of Western societies, manifested, for example, by the rise of right-wing populism, has to do with the overtly consensual nature of post-cold War liberal democracies (Mouffe 2005;

[8] *Bloomberg* 29.9.2019 "Draghi Says ECB Has Room to Do More, But Needs Fiscal Backup" (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-29/draghi-urges-closer-fiscal-union-higher-government-spending)

[9] *Financial Times,* "This is the new agenda" (https://aboutus.ft.com/en-gb/new-agenda/)

2018). The argument is that since the fall of socialism, Western democracies have been characterized by a post-political stasis. As the left has subscribed to neoliberal globalization as well, societies are deprived of democratic alternatives. Political conflicts have lost their characters as clashes between differing democratic projects.

Mouffe's line of thought provides us with a way of understanding the current turmoil of public communications and the emphasis on politics of difference and "identity politics" (see Haider 2018). As politics were declined of the conflictual dimension where varying hegemonic demands on, for example, the economy could be articulated, political conflicts lost their democratic character. They turned into confrontations "between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identification" (Mouffe 2013, 7). The argument is that when political passions and political identity-building could not be articulated in the form of varying democratic and politico-ideological demands, identity-building became a question of seeking differences merely based on race, gender, ethnicity or religion.

Mouffe therefore stresses that the goal of democratic politics is to tame "antagonism" (conflictual dynamics inherent to all social life) into the form of an "agonism" (a struggle between adversaries who share a commitment to democratic principles). This does not entail that the aim of democratic politics is to erase conflicts via reason and argumentation. Rather, the goal of democracy is to "sublimate" (Mouffe 2013, 9) passions via structuring collective forms of identifications around different democratic demands. Should the political community lack these democratic demands, political conflicts take the form of an antagonism between "enemies" (ibid., 9). In an antagonistic setting, the enemy is not a legitimate democratic adversary but someone who proposes an essentialist threat and must thus be destroyed.

Drawing from Mouffe's line of thought, scholars have argued that the democratic role of the media is to foster ideological contestation between different democratic and hegemonic projects (Raeijmaekers and Maeseele 2015; Maeseele and Raeijmaekers 2017). Journalism should work to open spaces for democratic contestation. The self-evident nature of austerity policies, for example, should be challenged by actively analysing the workings of the political economy from various perspectives.

To bring this argument closer to journalism practise, one can build on Géraldine Muhlmann's differentiation (2008; 2010) between a journalism that "unifies" and a journalism that "decentres". Muhlmann argues that historically, professional journalism has been divided between these two poles. With the rise of the popular press, the ideal-typical journalist has been the unifying one who has sought to bring together a vast amount of readers, listeners or spectators to form a common "we", the centre of political life. Muhlmann (2008, 95–111) illustrates this with the example of the famous American broadcast journalist Edward Murrow, who took on the U.S Senator Joseph McCarthy, famous for his anti-communist investigations and accusations in the 1950s. The aim of Murrow's TV journalism was to expose

the untruthful nature of McCarthyism and "re-centre" (Muhlmann 2008, 100) the American "we", de-centred by McCarthy's false accusations and his attempts to disintegrate the communists from the American public. Murrow, through exposing the fabricated nature of McCarthy's claims, sought to consolidate the American public and bring those falsely accused of communist sympathies back to the community. The public was, again, centred against the decentring figure of McCarthy who attempted to sow conflict within the essentially anti-communist American public.

On the other hand, journalism can work to "de-centre" by pinpointing the conflicts and differing material interests that divide the political community. Muhlmann (2008, 135–194) traces the roots of a more de-centrifying mode of journalism to the adversarial culture of the 1960s and 1970s. The adversarial culture accelerated the disillusionment with the objectifying project of journalism. Those in favour of a more adversarial reporting argued that journalism should de-centre the "bourgeois public" (ibid., 71) by portraying the contradictions and class conflicts inherent in society. Importantly, decentring journalism is underpinned by a different view on politics than centring journalism: politics is about "conflictuality which does not create any community" (Muhlman 2010, 188). Instead of attempting to create a consensual we, journalism should portray the antagonist nature of the society to make room for different democratic demands.

As I have argued, amid politico-economic flux and the technological shifts underpinning our media life – characterized by increasing hybridity between traditional media and digital media landscapes (Chadwick 2013) – it is difficult for journalism to reclaim the role it had in the Western societies in the mid-20th century. As political, economic and technological fundamentals of professional journalism are undergoing major shifts, journalism should not take its traditional function as the authoritative truth-teller and democratic watchdog as self-evident. Indeed, to protect and develop what is important in journalism in terms of democratic life, journalism should perhaps adopt a more de-centring role in a world shook by the return of radical politics and alternatives to established political thought. Perhaps journalism should tone down on the "aghast" (Freedman 2018, 604) on the populist rupture and adopt a de-centring tone that would analyse the contradictions and fractions that underpin early 21st century Western societies.

This is, no doubt, a demanding task. It is unclear whether there is room for manoeuvring in a highly competitive media environment where resources are increasingly scarce. How can we rethink established hiring practices to create more newsroom diversity, and how can we diverge from established sourcing patterns to steer clear from overly consensual journalism? Bringing up issues that might sometimes contradict common wisdom on such issues as economic policy is difficult for journalists for whom such values as neutrality and factuality are of upmost importance. How can these ideas be implemented in newsroom practices or in journalism schools? This is a gargantuan task in a media environment that is much more fractured and dispersed than the

regulated media sphere of the 20th century. Therefore, no easy fixes lay ahead. In addition to developing journalism practice, questions concerning media policy and economic policy need to be incorporated into the debate.

Other issues arise, too. As media spheres dominated by well-established journalistic organisations give way to a more fragmented public life, it is reasonable to ask whether the focus of analysis should be different. When calling for a journalistic culture more attuned to the new era of antagonisms, perhaps we should look to the counter-hegemonic and partisan journalistic outlets that have taken on the established press since the financial crisis and amid populist turmoil.[10] Perhaps a plethora of partisan outlets can articulate political demands and various radical "counter-publics" (Karppinen 2009, 58) that can contribute to an ideologically pluralistic public sphere. Without a doubt, established media institutions with the capacity to engage in resource-consuming watchdog journalism are still very much needed.

Moreover, it is reasonable to argue whether the agonistic approach is the way forward. One can argue that the radical critique towards the consensual features of liberal democracy has been "tipped over" (Dahlgren 2018, 26) in a world that seems fragmented and overtly hostile, incapable of determined action to tackle such existentialist threats as climate change. Therefore, the ability to build compromises and consensuses through deliberation could be more crucial than ever. Here, two lines of thought can be pinpointed. The consensus-building perspective stresses the importance of communication strategies and forums where ideological polarization can be diffused while the critical perspective emphasizes the importance of ideological contestation to envisage alternative futures (Pepermans and Maeseele 2016).

One can also reasonably question whether the relationship between deliberative strands of democratic thought and more radical perspectives is as agonistic as sometimes stated by scholars such as Mouffe. Lincoln Dahlberg (2005) argues that the radical-pluralist critique of deliberative democratic theory—according to which the emphasis on consensus and rationalist modes of communication excludes alternative voices—is partly based on a poor reading of deliberative thinkers as such Habermas. Not all deliberative democrats are dismissive of the notion that the discourse in public sphere involves confrontation (Dahlberg 2005, 127). It, therefore, is a mischaracterisation to state that deliberative theory categorically dismisses questions of power and exclusion. Instead, a deliberative public sphere is an ideal that can be useful in pinpointing forms of domination and reducing forms of exclusion. Indeed, in stating that that public debate entails conflicts and domination, deliberative theory is somewhat akin to the agonistic approach. It, however, seems that agonistic thinkers emphasise the importance of fostering different ideological positions, whereas deliberative

[10] *New Statesman* 25.9.2017 '"Luxury Communism now!" The rise of the pro-Corbyn media' (https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2017/09/luxury-communism-now-rise-pro-corbyn-media)

theory "continues to rely on [a] rational consensus as a regulative ideal" (Karppinen 2009, 57).

The way forward for democratic public communications is a topic for further inquiry. I do, however, think that moving towards the values of decentring might help to vitalize journalism and democratic communications. Importantly, giving voice to various politico-ideological projects and contestations that have emerged since the financial crisis would not mean that journalism would need to give up on such values as truthfulness or factuality. On the contrary, it would be an opportunity for journalism to strengthen its role as a democratic organ by shedding light on contradictions and conflicts that have emerged in the aftermath of austerity. Moreover, it might even have a healthy effect on democratic life which seems to have been taken over by hostilities and radical conflicts.

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